Circumstances Leading to the First Afghan War

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RESEARCH SOCIETY OF PAKISTAN

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UNIVERSITY OF THE PUNJAB
LAHORE

PUBLICATION No. 37

RESEARCH SOCIETY OF PAKISTAN IS GRATEFUL TO THE EVACUEE TRUST PROPERTY BOARD, GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN, FOR THE GENEROUS FINANCIAL GRANT FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ITS PUBLICATION PROGRAMME.

First Impression : January, 1975
Second Impression : January, 1976

Price : Rs. 12/-

PRINTED AT THE PUNJAB EDUCATIONAL PRESS, LAHORE

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PREFACE

Historians have long been fascinated by the first Anglo-Afghan War, 1839-42. The complete destruction of the Kabul garrison in January, 1841, during the course of its attempted withdrawal to Jalalabad, gave the original expedition an appearance of utter failure, which the subsequent reconquest of Kabul by the armies of Nott and Pollock in 1842 failed to obliterate. A famous picture, which showed a lonely survivor of the Kabul force arriving at Jalalabad, served to recall the tragedy to many a Victorian household.

Such a disaster needed a scapegoat and writing about the war has been dominated by the attempt to isolate the man responsible. Some writers have concentrated on the military errors which led to the loss of control in Afghanistan, but the predominant interest has been in the original decision to replace the Barakzai rulers of Kabul and Qandhar with the Sadozai claimant, Shah Shuja al-Mulk, aided by British and Indian troops. The first great writer on the subject, Sir John Kaye, distributed blame fairly generally among all those involved, while singling out, especially, the advisors of the Governor-General, Lord Auckland. Subsequent writers have concentrated their fire upon Alexander Burnes, the political agent who was sent to negotiate with the Barakzai ruler of Kabul, Dost Muhammad, and on members of the British Cabinet In recent years the tendency has been to absolve Lord Auckland from ultimate responsibility and to depict him as a conscientious administrator struggling to implement policies which were not of his making. Such is the argument of the *Cambridge History of India* and of Mr. J. A. Norris's recent *The First Afghan War, C. U. P. 1967.*

In this careful study of the correspondence which relates to the negotiations which preceded the war, and particularly, the correspondence relating to the negotiations of Burnes with Dost Muhammad and of Sir William Hay Macnaughten with Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja, Mr. Afzal Iqbal puts the responsibility back squarely on

the shoulders of Lord Auckland. Burnes was right, he argues. A deal could have been arranged with Dost Muhammad and it was Auckland's bad judgement which produced a totally unnecessary war.

Mr. Afzal Iqbal is well qualified to write about diplomacy. Himself a practising diplomat, he has, as Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in London.* given added distinction to his office by the breadth of his own cultural interests. His firm but dispassionate analysis of a disastrous episode in the diplomacy of the past deserves attention.

M. E. Yapp
School of Oriental and African Studies,
University of London W. C. I

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*The author has since been Ambassador to Switzerland, the Holy See, Brazil, Bolivia, Columbia, Paraguay, and is at present Ambassador to Sweden and Norway.

INTRODUCTION

The spell of Sir John William Kaye's immense influence on historians dealing with the events of the First Afghan War has at last been broken by J. A. Norris, a non professional historian, who in his admirable study, (The First Afghan War, Cambridge University Press, 1967) has sought to place in perspective events in the Indian theatre as part of the general problem of British diplomacy in the eastern Muslim world.

The pages that follow have been written by an amateur student of history belonging to Pakistan. The analysis of circumstances leading to the First Afghan War is based mainly on original sources in the Records Office of the Punjab Government at Lahore, and will, we hope, contribute to a useful discussion of a subject which has long been treated along partisan patterns.

Stockholm,
January 1, 1975

AFZAL IQBAL

INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

I was agreeably surprised at the first edition being disposed of within a few months of the publication of this monograph. The response of the discerning reader has indeed been a source of great encouragement to me. I hope this modest contribution will help increase the area of understanding with Afghanistan with which we in Pakistan share a rich heritage of religion, language and literature.

Pakistan House,
Stockholm.
January 1, 1976.

AFZAL IQBAL

CHAPTER 1

Circumstances Leading to the Annexation of Peshawar

The British Government, by contracting in 1809 a treaty with Ranjit Singh, had put a stop to his expansion towards the Cis Sutlej States.[1] In the absence of this outlet, the inevitable alternative for him was to extend his territory towards the north west frontier. Interested as he was in Peshawar, he naturally felt concerned at the rumours of Shah Mahmood's march towards it.[2] On learning, however, that the Shah's intention was only to punish or overawe the Governor of Kashmir, who had sided with his brother Shah Shuja, the haughty Sikh received him with some ceremony and obvious satisfaction.[3] This meeting of the two rulers incited Fateh Khan, the greatest figure in the history of Durrani kingdom[4], to cross the Indus at the end of 1812. He had designed to march against Kashmir and the clever Ranjit Singh, anxious to assure his own safety, entered into an alliance with him[5]. He promised help to the invader in his mission, The help rendered to Fateh Khan was, however, not very successful and effective[6]. Fateh Khan was suddenly called back by the imperative of domestic politics, which was subject to uncertain fluctuation and change at any moment. Through a master stroke of fortune Ranjit Singh got Attock after the withdrawal of Fateh Khan, who was pursued by him and whose brother, Dost Muhammad Khan, was defeated near Attock on 13th July, 1813[7]. This was the first real victory of Sikhs over Afghans. From Attock to Peshawar was a small distance and soon we find the Sikhs making up their mind to traverse it.

During 1818, a great political commotion shook Afghanistan. Herat, which was held by a member of Ahmed Shah's family, had been attacked by Fateh Khan ; and Dost Muhammad had almost conquered it when some of his men entered the harem, and in their eagerness to secure her jewels, violated the person of a royal lady. Prince Kamran made this affront, offered to a sister, a pretext for getting rid of the man who was not concerned with the affair at all. He ruthlessly blinded[8] Fateh Khan, cut off his limbs and hacked them to pieces[9]. The assassination of Fateh Khan made the Sadozai dynasty a heap of ruins[10]. After him Afghanistan was parcelled out among Barakzais. Shah Ayub was declared puppet king ; Muhammad Azim Khan got Kabul ; Dost Muhammad was given Ghazni ; Pur Dil Khan, Kohan Dil Khan and others got Kandhar ; Jabbar Khan took Ghilji country ; and Sultan Muhammad Khan and his brothers succeeded to the country of Peshawar[11]. This sudden dismemberment of a kingdom favoured the designs of Ranjit Singh, who at the end of 1818, crossed the Indus and entered Peshawar, which was evacuated at his approach. He decided, however, not to retain it. Placing Jahandar Khan, his old ally of Attock, in possession of Peshawar, he asked him to hold it by his own means ; and himself retired to the Punjab after garrisoning Khairabad. The Barakzai Governor, Yar Muhammad Khan, returned as soon as the Sikh ruler left Peshawar. Jahandar Khan, resourceless as he was, yielded without even trying to defend the city. In 1823, through the treachery of Yar Muhammad, Azim Khan who had once vanquished Ranjit Singh in Kashmir was defeated by him[12]. Peshawar was sacked and the country plundered as far as the Khyber Pass. The general hostile spirit that prevailed among the tribesmen, however, rendered it impossible for the Sikhs to retain Peshawar. The prudent Maharaja, therefore, in view of these difficulties, gladly accepted the submission of Yar Muhammad[13]. The hostile attitude of the population led him to station 120,000 troops at Peshawar under Hari Singh Nalwa[14]. Money was indiscriminately exacted from the chiefs of the locality and this aggressive policy continued so long as there was no strong ruler on the throne of Kabul[15].

Exploits of Syed Ahmad and the Decision to annex Peshawar

About this time a challenger appeared in the valley of Peshawar.

A native of Bareilly, Syed Ahmed had gathered round him a large number of valiant followers who were always ready to sacrifice their lives for the Prophet and his cause[16]. Syed Ahmed was able, in a few years actually, to attack and occupy Peshawar. The ruler fled at the approach of the Mujahids and took refuge in Kohat, thirty miles from his capital[17].

The news of the fall of Peshawar caused some concern in Lahore. The Sikhs considerably strengthened their force at the Indus and began to make feverish preparations to wrest back Peshawar. So serious was the situation, in fact, that the Sikh ruler had to accompany the main body of his force. Syed Ahmed relinquished Peshawar to Sultan Muhammad Khan at a fixed rate[18], and finally evacuated it on the approach of the Sikh troops in 1830. The Maharaja took away a son of Sultan Muhammad Khan as hostage[19] ; and the Syed who had fled away was pursued, attacked and overpowered by Sher Singh in Bala Kot, where he died fighting with 500 men. This victory was an occasion for great rejoicing for the Sikhs. A royal salute was fired and the city of Amritsar was profusely illuminated[20].

In view of Syed Ahmed's activities on the frontier, and in view of the difficulties of Sultan Muhammad Khan's position and the general insecurity of the province, Ranjit Singh decided that the situation called for complete absorption of Peshawar[21]. He, in fact, had wanted to annex it as early as 1827 but had postponed it partly due to his protracted illness in 1827-28, and partly owing to the serious mutiny and general insubordination shown in these years by regular troops stationed on the frontier[22]. By 1834 he had finally made up his mind, and was in search of a pretext. He soon found one. The Peshawar brothers were asked to increase the tribute of horses[23] on account of Naunihal Singh's presence for the first time at the head of an army. The brothers complied[24]. A force of 9,000[25] men under the nominal command of Naunihal Singh, but in fact led by Hari Singh Nalwa, crossed the Indus[26], and established itself at Chamkauri. The Sirdars grew suspicious of the designs of the Sikhs and fled to Shabkadar which was occupied on 6 May, 1834[27]. Had the Afghans been commanded by leaders more competent and less timid, they might have driven back stronger forces and retained possession of the place[28]. The Maharaja now ordered the fortifica-

tion of Bala Hissar. It was first set to fire and then taken possession of by the unruly Sikhs. The Maharaja had now conquered Peshawar by the force of his arms and was the *de jure* sovereign of the land. Sultan Muhammad Khan, the ex-Governor, sent many envoys to him with a request for his restoration to Peshawar, in lieu of a regular annual tribute ; but Ranjit Singh did not pay any heed to his numerous entreaties. The request of Ayub Shah, who had applied through Raja Dhayan Singh for the conferment of Peshawar on him as a tributary, was not even acknowledged. Ranjit Singh sent a congratulatory letter to the British Government and to the wife of Shah Shuja on the completion of his mission[29]. He had made his choice. The British Government faltered and hesitated, but he was resolute in his determination. He concluded an alliance with Shah Shuja, though the British Government refused to be a party to it. It must be remembered that Shah Shuja, when on his way to Shikarpur, had entered into an alliance with *Ranjit Singh in 1833.* By one of the articles of this treaty, he had ceded Peshawar to the Sikhs. The possession of Peshawar, as we shall see later, was not a bed of roses for Ranjit Singh. He occupied it because he wanted to make it secure before Shah Shuja became too strong to challenge his claim to that territory.

Encounter with Shah Shuja : Dost Muhammad fights for his throne

Neglected as a boy, once a sweeper at the sacred cenotaph of Lamech[30], through dint of sheer ability, Dost Muhammad had by now become the supreme ruler of Afghanistan[31]. His "just and strong government[32]" caused a material change in the aggressive N.W.F. policy of Ranjit Singh, who in retaliation, now turned to the exiled monarch Shah Shuja, to help him in recovering his lost throne. The destitute prisoner of Ludhiana, despite his assurances to the Government about overwhelming support in Afghanistan[33], failed to persuade Lord William Bentinck to intervene on his behalf. "My friend", he wrote to the Shah, "I deem it my duty to apprise you distinctly, that the British Government religiously abstains from intermedling with the affairs of its neighbours ..to afford you assistance for the purpose which you have in contemplation, would not consist with that neutrality which on such occasions is the rule of guidance adopted by the Government[34]". Captain Wade, the British

agent on the N.W.F. was, however, sympathetic and contrived to get the Shah his four months' stipend in advance. Commenting on this step, Sir H.M. Durand remarks "the Governor-General committed a grave error, one not to be measured by the smallness of the sum[35]". Such an act could not fail to be construed as material aid and effectual countenance of the Shah's designs. It encouraged him, and incensed his opponents against the British Government, which, with professions of peace and goodwill on its lips, appeared to furnish means for the war—a system of non-interference on the part of a very powerful Government not at all comprehensible to the Afghan rulers[36]". With insufficient money and inadequate supply of men[37], the optimistic monarch quitted Ludhiana on January 28, 1833 on an expedition to regain his throne[38].

The news of this expedition upset Dost Muhammad, who was at this time confronted with great domestic difficulties. His brothers, the Chiefs of Kandhar and Peshawar, were combining for his overthrow, and the latter was intriguing with the Sikhs, who were ultimately invited to cross the Attock. Many of his chiefs were in communication with Shah Shuja ; the news writer having become a partisan of Shah Shuja was in constant correspondence with Wade. "The disaffection of the Kazilbash leaders, whose conduct, with that of their horses, had been of a very doubtful complexion[39], caused further anxiety. Meeting treachery within and hostility without, his position was perilous. To top it all, he found a copy of Shah Shuja's treaty with Ranjit Singh and many letters of Wade written to people who might be of some assistance to the Shah in his expedition[40]. The effect of these letters written by the accredited representative of a great power which claimed to "abstain religiously[41]" from intervention can be better imagined than described. To further worsen the situation Nawab Jabbar Khan and Zaman Khan were intriguing against the Ameer. The latter even suggested to him the futility of going to war against Shah Shuja ; the Vizier thought that Shah Shuja would certainly be victorious[42].

It was in this grim situation that Dost Muhammad received news that Shah Shuja, after having established his supremacy over Sind, had advanced towards Kandhar. The Ameer without further hesitation went

to the help of his brothers and defended Kandhar against the invaders. The fight was intense. Though the Shah's battalions, under Campbell, fought bravely and defiantly, the scales soon turned against the invaders. The Durrani forces fled from the field—a feeble and broken spirited rabble. The Shah himself fled to Furrah and then to Kalat[43].

From one field to Another : Loss of Peshawar

Hardly had Dost Muhammad contended with one danger, when another equally formidable and consequential threat arose before him. The Sikhs had conquered Peshawar in 1834[44]. The Ameer, after his victory against Shah Shuja, sent a letter to Maharaja Ranjit Singh in which he declared war against him[45]. He accused the Maharaja of having broken the agreement between him and Sultan Muhammad Khan. Ranjit Singh took up the challenge[46] and Amirul-Mominin Dost Muhammad Khan Ghazi[47] declared 'Jihad' against the Sikhs. There was a tremendous response to his call[48] to arms and the Ameer Ghazi with a huge army left Kabul on 2nd January, 1835 to attack the Sikhs[49].

Ranjit Singh, on the other hand, was equally bent upon retaining Peshawar. He reinforced his already assembled troops of about 25,000 men[50]. He took all the troops under him ; so great was the stress that Lahore and Amritsar were left without armies[51]. The Sikh ruler himself crossed the Indus and encamped at Nowshera on 4 May, 1835[52]. The foe was strong and their number great. His heart quailed before the immense gathering[53]. Instead of daring straightaway to engage Dost Muhammad, Ranjit Singh sent an envoy to negotiate with him. Dr. Harlan, his envoy, rose equal to the situation and managed the whole affair with magnificent cleverness. "I divided Dost Muhammad's brothers againt him," he wrote, "exciting their jealousy of his growing power, and exasperating the family feuds, I induced his brother, Sultan Muhammad Khan, the lately deposed Chief of Peshawar, with 10,000 retainers, to withdraw suddenly from his camp about nightfall." The result was that "at daybreak no vestige of the Afghan camp was seen, where six hours before 50,000 men and 10,000 horses were rife with the tumult of wild emotion[35]".

The Maharaja had intended to attack Dost Muhammad on the morning of 12 May, 1835 but through the ignominious treachery

of his brother he fled on the night of 11 May with all his troops, after refusing terms which the Maharaja offered him[55]. Dost Muhammad, disappointed with defeat reached Jalalabad three days later[56]. The Maharaja left Peshawar on 23rd May, 1835, and left Mon. Ventura with a force of 2,000 sawars, 4 battalions of infantry and 5,000 Akali troops for the Government of Peshawar. The Maharaja conferred Jagirs of Rupees three lacs per annum on Sultan Muhammad Khan on the condition of fidelity and the tribute of horses[57] by the two brothers.

Sultan Muhammad Khan like Shah Shuja promised to relinquish all personal and family claims on Peshawar[58]. He accepted the Jagir, which he was to enjoy on condition of serving the Maharaja with his son and his brother Syed Muhammad Khan. Peshawar brothers were also to exert their utmost resources in placing Ranjit Singh in possession of Jalalabad and if called upon to do so, to accompany the Sikh army with troops on their march against Kabul, Kandhar, or Shikarpur[59].

After this humiliating defeat, it was no longer a matter of doubt that Peshawar had been lost by the Afghans for ever.

SECTION 2

CONDITIONS ON THE EVE OF LORD AUCKLAND'S ARRIVAL

In 1835, the Peel Ministry was overthrown by the Whigs. The new cabinet, with Lord Melbourne at its head, and Lord Palmerston in the India Office, almost reversed the policy of their predecessors, especially in regard to India. They cancelled the appointment of Lord Heylesbury, the nominee of the Peel Ministry and appointed Auckland as the Governor-General of India[60]. A "sound Whig henchman[61]" replaced one who was known for his Russo-Phil sentiments[62]. The new Governor-General took the oath of office on March 20, 1836. India at that time was tranquil and calm ; she did not need a vigorous Governor-General. In entrusting the office to Lord Auckland, the Ministry thought that they had entrusted it to safe hands. The treasury was overflowing with money, and the quietest ruler was supposed to be the best. But, as we shall see in the following chapter, the period of profound tranquillity soon became a period of disturbance and disaster.

Afghanistan

With Auckland's accession to office, the primary British political interest shifted to the North West Frontier of India, and Afghanistan became the storm centre of Central Asian politics. Afghanistan at this time contained three important cities—Kabul, Kandhar and Herat.

In 1836 Kabul was ruled by Dost Muhammad of the Barakzai clan. This clan held sway over the whole of Afghanistan except Herat, where the Sadozai, Kamran, was ruling. Dost Muhammad had scored a victory over Shah Shuja in 1834.[63] This gave him moral as well as political influence among his countrymen which greatly augmented his power. He assumed in 1835 the title of Amir-ul-Mominin

and was the hero of the Afghan character. While the Amir was fighting Shah Shuja outside Kandhar, Peshawar had been wrested from his brother by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh ruler of Lahore. Dost Muhammad, at the time of Auckland's arrival in India, was smarting at the failure of his attempt to recover Peshawar. He was determined to use every effort, which political interest as well as a desire of self-preservation could suggest, to disturb the Sikhs in the occupation of Peshawar. There was not a Muslim chief between the Oxus and the Sutlej whose co-operation he had not invited to this end.[64] At the arrival of Lord Auckland, Dost Muhammad addressed a congratulatory letter to him on his assumption of office and sought guidance on this matter[65].

Central Asia was apparently showing peace and tranquillity after the Treaty of Turk-Muchai in 1828. By this treaty, the Shah of Persia parted with another large slice of territory ; conceded to Russia the sole right of keeping an armed fleet in the Caspian and agreed to pay reparation of nearly four million sterling. Even this failed to appease the great northern power. Though during these years Russia added little outwardly to its dominions, she obtained great moral ascendancy which, perhaps, secured better its ends than the actual extension of territory. The policy of intimidation was successfully played. It was the object of Russia to use the resources of Persia in furthering her own ends, without openly taking possession of territory and thus tacitly avoiding collision with other powers. Persia meekly yielded ; and in due course she became a docile tool in the hands of Russia. Such briefly is the history of relations between Persia and Russia since Turk-Muchai. It goes without saying that during this time the British influence declined at the Persian Court ; in fact no pains were ever taken to preserve it until it became apparent that the encroachment of Persia, instigated and encouraged by the Russian Government, was intended to threaten the security of the British Empire in India.[66] The plan of Russia was to push the Persians to Herat, "The gate of India."

Lord Auckland had not been very long in India before he wrote[67], "ever since I have been here, more than one event has occurred which has led me to think that the period of disturbance is nearer than I had either wished or expected." The growing restlessness of the 'old man

of Lahore' who still hankered after the jungles and treasures of Sind, the excessive importance attached to the opening of the Indus, the advance of the Persians towards Herat—all these alarmed Auckland. "In the meanwhile", he added, "I have entreated Ranjit Singh to be quiet, and in regard to his last two requests I have refused to give him 50,000 muskets."[68]

At the time, when in India Lord Auckland was becoming disillusioned about the bright prospects of the country, in England, McNeill, Urquhart and others were analysing the Eastern Question. Reviewers and pamphleteers were piling up their collections of facts and arguments. It was clear to these analysists that if Russia was not herself advancing stealthily towards India, she was slowly but firmly pushing Persia forward in that direction. If the situation, argued the pamphleteers, was not alarming, at least the statesmen and diplomats perceived the impending peril of Russian expansion. Public opinion was thus roused over an important issue. Russia caused universal alarm and was dreaded as a monster.

It is clear that the position in India at the time of Lord Auckland's arrival was far from satisfactory. Maharaja Ranjit Singh being debarred from eastward expansion,[69] had extended his kingdom to the west of the Indus[70], and was considering schemes of aggrandizement against his northern neighbours[71]. On the Western frontier, Muhammad Shah of Persia had been deprived of a considerable portion of his kingdom in the north by Russia. Seeing no chance of its possible recovery in the near future, he undertook to offset his losses by his own plans of conquest. Inspired and encouraged by Russia he claimed sovereignty over Afghanistan as far as Ghazni and openly declared his intention of sacking Herat.[72]

While the British Government believed that its interests lay in preserving the integrity of Afghanistan,[73] Russia deemed her commercial and political interests[74] could be served better through her disintegration. This created a tense situation between Britain and Russia.

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FOOT NOTES

1. Cunningham, Joseph D: A History of the Sikhs, New Delhi, 1955, p. 137.
2. Ochterlony—Lushington, Dec. 1809 P.G.R.
3. Cunningham : History of the Sikhs, p. 160.
4. Elphinstone—Mountstuart: An Account of the kingdom of Kabul and its dependencies in Persia, Tartary and India, London, 1815, p. 79.
5. Ochterlony—Adam's 4th March 1813, P.G.R.
6. Ibid.,
7. Ochterlony—Adam's 16th April 1813, P.G.R.
8. Cunningham: History of the Sikhs, p. 167.
9. Murray—Metcalfe, 1851-57, 22 September, 1818, P.G.R.
10. Kaye John William: History of War in Afghanistan, London, V. I. p. III.
11. Ibid., V. I. p. *116*.
12. Cunningham: History of the Sikhs, p. 172.
13. Ibid.,
14. G. L. Chopra: The Punjab as a Sovereign State, p. 40.
15. Ibid.,
16. Wade—Metcalfe, 3 March 1827, P.G.R.
17. Captain Wade—Hawkins, 7 September 1830, P.G.R.
18. Cunnirgham: History of the Sikhs, p. 202.
19. (a) Wade—Hawkins, 19 Oct. 1830, P.G.R.

    (b) Wade—Macnaughten, 8 May 1833, P.G.R.
20. Wade to himself, 7 May 1831, P.G.R.
21. Wade—Resident, Delhi 13 Sept. 1833, P.G.R.
22. There were two views in the Sikh court about the annexation of Peshawar. One party opposed it and another under Hari Singh strongly favoured annexation. (Wade—Macnaughten, 7 August 1832), P.G.R.
23. The original treaty fixed an annual tribute of 15 horses of superior breed, ten 'Kharwars' of rice of Bara, and Persian swords. These conditions were renewed in 1824. (Mackeson—Wade, 16 Nov. 1837) P.G.R.

24. Burnes—Macnaughten, 19 May, 1834, P.G.R.
25. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, V. I. p. 133.
26. Cunningham: History of the Sikhs, p. 212.
27. Burnes—Macnaughten, 19 May, 1834, P G.R.
28. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, V. I. p. 133.
29. Wade—Macnaughten, 17 June, 1834, P.G.R.
30. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, V.I. p. 92.
31. Ibid., p. 117.
32. Kaye : War in Afghanistan, V.I. p. 106.
33. Ibid., p. 124.
34. Ibid., p. 125.
35. Rs. 16,000 @ Rs. 4000 p.m.
36. Sir H. M. Durand: First Afghan War and its Causes, London, 1879.
37. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, V.I. p. 127.
38. Ibid., p. 129.
39. Sir H. M. Durand: Op. cit.,
40. Ibid.,
41. Lord William Bentinck to Shah Shuja. Kaye, op. cit., 125.
42. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 127.
43. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 127.
44. c. f., p. 10.
45. Wade—Macnaughten, 25 Sept. 1834, P.G.R.
46. Wade—Macnaughten, 27 Jan. 1835, P.G.R.
    (b) Pottinger—Wade, 25 Feb. 1835, P.G.R.
47. On 4th December 1834, this title was conferred on him by a gathering of Mullas.
48. Wade—Macnaughten, 3rd Feb. 1835, P.G.R.
49. Masson's estimate of Dost Muhammad's resources was about 1 lac men and money worth 2 lac and 30 thousand rupees. (Wade—Mac. 28 April, 1835), P.G.R.
    Kaye estimated his hetrogeneous army consisted of 50,000 men and 10,000 horses (Kaye, op. cit., pp. 134-136).
50. Wade—Macnaughten, 25 Sept. 1834, P.G.R.
51. Ibid., 1st April, 1835, P.G.R.
52. Ibid., 15th May 1835, P.G.R.

53. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 134.
54. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 131.
55. Wade—Macnaughten, 19th May 1835, P.G.R.
The Maharaja insisted on keeping one of the Barakzai brothers in attendance on him.
56. Wade—Macnaughten, 23 May 1835, P.G.R.
57. Sultan Muhammad Khan was to be given districts of Hashtnagar yielding annual revenue worth Rs. 1,50,000; Kohat yielding Rs. 1,20,000 to Pir Muhammad; and Syed Muhammad Khan was to receive the district of Nahho producing a yearly revenue of Rs. 30,000.
(Wade-Macnaughten, 23rd May, 1835) P.G.R.
58. Ibid.,
59. Mackeson-Wade, 6 March, 1838, P.G.R.
60. It will be of some interest to note that Lord Heylesbury had been sworn in, and was due to leave for India when a change of cabinet came about (Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, vol. 5, p. 201).
61. Kaye; War in Afghanistan, p. 167.
62. Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, V. 5, p. 201.
63. We will refrain from giving authorities here because most of these things have been written in detail in the preceding section of this chapter. We are repeating some of them in order to maintain the sequence of events and make the subject more intelligible.
64. Wade-to Supreme Government, 141/9, P.G.R.
65. Indian Papers (1839).
66. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 154.
67. Auckland's letter to Metcalfe, dated Sept. 1836. Quoted in 'Earl of Auckland' (Rulers of India series) by L. J. Trotter, p. 42.
68. Ibid.,
69. (a) Treaty of Amritsar, April 28, 1809.
(b) Proclamation of Protection of Cis Sutlej States.
May 3, 1809.
(Cunningham; History of the Sikhs).

70. Indian Papers (1839), Burnes to Government, Sept. 8, 1837.
71. C. Wade to Supreme Government, July 13, 1836, 142/46. P.G.R.
72. Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan (1839), Rt. Hon'ble H. Ellis to Viscount Palmerston, Jan. 15, 1836,
73. (a) Government to Wade. Nov. 13, 1837, 118/69, P.G.R.

    (b) Wade to Government, Dec. 21, 1837, 145/16, P.G.R.
74. Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan (1839), H. Ellis to Lord Palmerston, (Jan. 15, 1836).

P.G.R.—Punjab Government Records.

CHAPTER 2

Burnes' Mission to Kabul : Auckland's Afghan Policy

Dost Muhammad's congratulatory letter to Lord Auckland has been mentioned in the latter section of the preceding chapter. In that letter,[1] while offering him felicitations on his appointment, Dost Muhammad appealed to the new Governor-General to "communicate to me whatever may now suggest itself to your wisdom for the settlement of the affairs of this country that it may serve as a rule (دستورالعمل) for my guidance.[2]" His Lordship, in his first communication to the Ameer of Kabul, expressed a wish that Afghanistan should flourish as a unified nation, live in peace with all its neighbours, and enjoy, by means of a more extended commerce, all the benefits and comforts possessed by other nations. Writing about the opening of the navigation of the Indus, proposed by his predecessors, he suggested, "It is probable that I may, ere long, depute some gentlemen to your Court, to discuss with you certain commercial topics, with a view to our mutual advantages."[3] The despatch of these 'gentlemen' constituted the mission which was to play an extremely important part in the history of the First Afghan War. The idea of the mission did not originate with Lord Auckland. Some people hold that it was at the suggestion of Sir John Malcolm that Lord William Bentinck gave serious consideration to this proposal[4], while others believe that the idea was that of Burnes and Burnes alone.[5] There is no doubt that Burnes, when he was in England in 1834, had tried his best to impress upon the Court of Directors the wisdom of despatching a commercial mission to Kabul[6]; and that "Lord William Bentinck was in communication with Burnes in India and in correspondence when he was in England".[7] But the most

remarkable fact in this context is the suggestion of a mission to Kabul by Dost Muhammad himself.[8] He suggested "a deputation of an Afghan agent to Calcutta...who on his return journey should be accompanied by British agents.[9]" The influence of Burnes, Malcolm or Bentinck on the project of 22nd August, was at best remote.

The mission and its instructions

Captain Alexander Burnes, Assistant to the Resident at Cutch was deputed to lead the mission to the countries bordering on the Indus.[10] At the time of his appointment he was in Hyderabad, (Sind) and had already served the Company for sixteen years. Burnes with his assistants, Major Leech, Lt. Wood and Dr. P. Lord of the Bombay Presidency ascended the Indus and Munshi Mohanlal was ordered by the Supreme Government to join him on the river.[11]

It was given out by the authorities that Captain Burnes' *mission* was strictly of a commercial character,[12] and he was directed in his letter of instructions to "prosecute the commercial enquiries with extreme caution, in no country to give offence or suspision to its rulers, and in all to act so as to mark the anxious desire of the British Government for the restitution of tranquillity and for the establishment of friendly relations[13]". En route to Kabul, Burnes halted at Hasan Abdal. There he received a communication from Dost Muhammad assuring him of a warm welcome[14]. But a more important communication was received from Abdul Samee Khan, Secretary to Dost Muhammad.[15] It broke the news that a Persian Elchee had arrived at Kandhar and intended to proceed to Kabul and that an embassy from the king of Bokhara had already reached Kabul[16]. Here the reader should not lose sight of the fact that while Dost Muhammad turned to Britain's representative in India for help,[17] he solicited, at the same time, the aid of Persia, Russia and Bokhara.[18] The situation changed,[19] and this intelligence had serious repercussions in Calcutta and in the Ludhiana agency.[20] It almost upset the British envoy who wrote on August 6, 1837 to Masson, the English News agent at Kabul: "I much fear that I shall yet be involved in great embarrassments, I have only one sheet anchor left, which is, that they will be roused in Calcutta to make some decided exertions, at variance with our late sleepy policy and if they are not, then I even question the

propriety of their having ever deputed me to Kabul."[21]

As Burnes ascended the Indus,[22] the character of the mission was modified in view of new developments. The envoy was given discretion to negotiate in this matter, and he proceeded with his iournev. The tenor of instructions was as follows :

"If you learn that the Sikhs and Afghan Amirs should have but little disposition to advance from a consciousness of military inferiority on the one side, and from the anticipation of difficulties in the mountains and unproductive country on the other, and that a desire has been evinced by both the contending parties rather for political adjustment than for conflict and that without committing your Government to the exercise of direct influence, you may either safely act on your original instructions or perhaps contribute something to the restoration of peace. But beyond commercial information His Lordship in Council will expect to have conveyed to him whatever you may learn upon the present condition, the history of the internal Government since the period of your last visit, about the Revenues, the Military Establishment and Resources, the power of the Chiefs, the dispositions of the people in each country that you may visit and as far as may be in the countries contiguous. You will particularly find out what has been the degree of recent connection with Persia and by what agents it has been conducted and what would be the probable result of a Persian attack on Herat. You will observe the general feeling towards the British and the Russian Governments, the impression prevailing of the power and resources of either, the degree in which the supposition is entertained of an intimate union between the Persian and the Russian Governments and in which the supposition is likely to have influence. You will gather all the information in your power on the commerce of Russia and on the measures adopted by the power with the object of extending her influence in Asia. You are authorised also as you may judge it expedient to address letters to Shah Kamran of Herat, to the King or Minister of Bokhara and other chiefs expressing friendship on the part of your Government and stating that you have come to arrange measures for the encouragement of commerce with India".[23]

The quiet and unassuming character given at the outset[24] to the mission was changed and the flimsy veil was lifted.[25]

The work of the mission : Peshawar Question.

Burnes arrived in Kabul on 20th September, 1837, through Kalabagh and Dera Ismail Khan.[26] Delegates were given a right royal reception in the capital where a spacious and beautiful garden within the Bala Hissar was allotted to them for residential purposes.[27] Having finished the preliminary formalities, Burnes was granted a private interview on 24th September. No one except Akbar Khan was present in the meeting which lasted until midnight. Dost Muhammad made it absolutely clear that he was tied up in great difficulties and could not think of commercial issues in the face of such imminent dangers. He urgently needed the help of the British Government for the settlement of the Afghan-Sikh affair.[28] "The same motives which led to your saving Shikarpur from the aggression of Sikhs," he said, "will, I hope, induce you for some similar consideration to interfere in the affairs of Peshawar and Kabul[29]." He agreed to send a son to Lahore to ask Maharaja Ranjit Singh's forgiveness, and if he would consent to give up Peshawar to him, he would hold it tributary to Lahore and consider himself *in that part of dominion* as holding under Ranjit Singh[30]. Moreover he expressed his readiness to confirm Sultan Muhammud Khan in the possession of Jagirs by Ranjit Singh.[31] Burnes, convinced of his sincerity and surprised at the moderation and humility of Dost Muhammad nevertheless believed strongly that Peshawar could be held to advantage by the Barakzai chief Sultan Muhammad Khan. The relinquishment of Peshawar, in his opinion, would result in numerous advantages to the Afghan chief. It would, for instance, bring commercial prosperity to the Ameer because increased exactions from merchants and cultivators would stop with the relinquishment of Peshawar. The need for maintaining troops on that side would then naturally cease to exist. This would be another item of economy. These economic advantages, Burnes argued, would be accompanied by political benefits. It would for instance, provide for the concentration and strength of power which was the crying need of Afghanistan.[32]

Despite these arguments by Burnes against relinquishing

Peshawar, Dost Muhammad did not budge an inch from his position. To him the recovery of Peshawar was a vital question. He wanted it for himself, not for his brother whom he called "a treacherous friend and a bitter enemy[33]" How could he agree to have an enemy as his neighbour? His country might as well remain in the hands of the Sikhs rather than in the hands of Sultan Muhammad Khan[34]. He argued that the purpose of Raja Ranjit Singh and Sultan Muhammad Khan was identical. "Sultan Muhammad Khan has just sent an agent to the ex-king at Ludhiana (Shah Shuja) to offer his services to combine against me and to secure my brother at Kandhar, in support of his coalition. What security am I to receive against a recurrence of such practices[35]"? he asked. The Ameer also pointed out that many Chiefs who belonged to Peshawar had, during the Sikh rule of the city, resided in Kabul. If the Barakzai ruler was re-established in Peshawar, they would return, but also with them would proceed everyone who might take offence at his merits not being appreciated. His position in that case would be further seriously endangered[36].

Both Burnes and Dost Muhammad had strong reasons to offer and, as is usually the case in such positions, the parties could not agree to a common formula. Burnes, however, sent the proposals to Wade with his own views about the relinquishment of Peshawar[37]. The Supreme Government[38] and the Ludhiana agency had the same opinion.[39]

Fate of the October proposals

But curiously enough, these proposals were never submitted to Ranjit Singh.[40] Wade was sceptical and wrote, "His Highness will not, in my opinion, be so ready to agree to these terms as those who are not so intimately acquainted with his character might suppose[41]." It was perhaps with this arrogant presumption that Wade did not care to forward the proposals to the right quarters. The whole year 1837 passed and it was not until the end of January of the next year that Burnes received further instructions about Peshawar.[42] The Ameer was told to waive his own claim to Peshawar and be content with such arrangements as the Maharaja may make with Sultan Muhammad Khan.[43]

The Government, which claimed so much to know the mind of Ranjit Singh,[44] was so grossly ignorant of the mind of Dost Muhammad that he complained on the receipt of this letter that "the British policy is neutralising the power of Afghanistan and is sowing seeds of future dissensions.[45]" "To Ranjit Singh," he said to Burnes, "your interference is beneficial; he finds himself involved in serious difficuties by the possession of Peshawar and is too glad to escape from a place which is a burden to his finances, but by escape a gratitude is exactable from him and not from me.[46]"

Height of the Ameer's humiliation : Jubbar Khan's proposals

Negotiations, however, did not break down at this stage. Nawab Jubbar Khan who was present in the meeting began to speak and offered a workable compromise. He pleaded that on the basis of a treaty with Ranjit Singh, Peshawar may be divided between Sultan Muhammad Khan and Ameer Dost Muhammad ; the Raja receiving equal fixed tribute from both of them.[47] The proposal was seriously taken up by Burnes, who placed all the more value on it, because it had emanated from a person so well known for his pro-British tendencies[48]. He forwarded it to his Government with a strong appeal to consider the reasonable offer. "It appears to me", he wrote, "that they call for such deliberation. It will be seen that the Chief is not bent on possessing Peshawar or on gratifying an enmity towards his brother, but simply pursuing the worldly maxim of securing himself from injury. His interests are bound up with the British Government which he will never desert as long as there is a hope of securing one.[49]" Wade wrote on the proposals that they seemed more reasonable than the previous ones, and that he would do his best, with the sanction of the Governor-General, to get them accepted by the Maharaja. It has not been possible, however, to ascertain whether any attempt was actually made to bring about a settlement on this basis. Certainly nothing came out of this proposal.

In an important letter[50] to Macnaughten, dated 19th July, 1836, Wade says that at this stage the Ameer took occasion to observe, "I hear the Government at Calcutta consider me unworthy of their notice, or otherwise I cannot account for their neglect of me—I have done all on my part to come to an understanding with them, but have

received not the slightest encouragement. I have done something that I should not have done, had I had any reason to hope from them—I have only one wish that the business be brought to close."[51]

The crisis came on 21st February, 1838, when Burnes received a letter of instructions from his Government. The communication was couched in decisive language; it charged Burnes to tell the Ameer "that in endeavouring to induce Maharaja Ranjit Singh to refrain from prosecuting further hostilities against him, the British Government had made the utmost demand which its interests and long established friendship admitted upon the consideration which that powerful Ruler was willing to show to the wishes of the British Government which was willing to tender, that should Dost Muhammad attempt to form any other political connection through Persian and Russian agents, British interposition should then be wholly withdrawn."

Despite this discouraging attitude, Dost Muhammad did not break off talks at this stage. A ray of hope would occasionally appear, only to be lost in the appalling gloom of despair. On the 6th of March, however, the Ameer was in an extraordinarily compromising mood. "I throw myself," he said, "on the generosity of the Governor-General of India."[52] He acquiesced in the terms stated by Burnes and promised to sever all connections with Persia, to dismiss the Russian agents, to surrender all claims to Peshawar, to live on friendly terms with Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and to co-operate in arrangements to unite the Barakzais.[53] No mortal in his position could go further ; there could not be a more concrete proof of his sincerity and desire for British friendship. He had made an extravagant bid for friendship and had asked in return an assurance in writing that the British Government would strenuously endeavour to get altered the state of things in Peshawar. Burnes refused to give a written pledge.

Now there remained little common ground and the negotiations completely broke down at this stage.

The Kandhar tangle : Persian-Afghan rapprochement

Muhammad Shah at the head of the Persian army was on his way to Herat when Burnes arrived at Kabul,[54] and Kumber Ali Khan

the Persian Elchee had already reached the Court of Kandhar[55]. Burnes, therefore, was occupied immediately after his arrival with the formidable task of alienating Kabul and Kandhar from Persia. Early in October, he reported to his Government that Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan either possessed or feigned to possess no good feelings towards Persia, speaking contemptuously of the late campaign at Khorasan.[56] But within a month of his arrival it became known that Sirdar Kohin Dil Khan had finally decided to despatch Muhammad Omar Khan to Persia.[57] Kandhar's predilection for a Persian alliance was very strong. Besides the fear which the Barakzais had of Persian designs, they sought protection from the Sadozai monarchy of Herat and from their brothers at Kabul. Kamran had repeatedly threatened the integrity of their principality and although Dost Muhammad Khan had given no sign of doing the same, there was not much affection between the brothers and they feared his ambitious nature[58]. Burnes worked vigorously to alienate Afghanistan and Kandhar from Persia, His efforts bore fruit; the Ameer expressed regret for his intercourse with Persia, and along with Burnes sent strong letters to the Kandhar brothers at the end of October, urging them to close all intercourse with the West[59]. Kohin Dil Khan, in response to this gesture now postponed the departure of his son to Persia[60] and awaited advice from Kabul.[61] Dost Muhammad who had collaborated with Burnes in alienating the brothers from the Persian connection could not offer a substitute alliance of security. Nor could Burnes because he had no positive instructions on this issue. Burnes, therefore, wanted to mark time without arousing the suspicion of these rulers.

Burnes' Kandhar Policy

The development took such a turn as to make it impossible for the policy of wait and see to continue much longer. There is a strange irony in the whole situation. Burnes was dealing with a first rate political crisis and he had no instructions about it, nor was he allowed any initiative. On 19 November he had enquired from his Government "how far it would go in its offers either of money, countenance or protection to detach the chiefs of Afghanistan from a Persian alliance[62]." On 19 December—exactly after a month—a Persian agent arrived at Kabul and Kandhar[63], and simultaneously with his arrival a communication reached Burnes from Kohin Dil Khan. The

letter's tone of despair was symbolic of the situation. The Sirdar had detained his son from going to Persia in the hope of British aid but it did not come. When would it come ? His chiefship was in danger. He was acting on the very natural instinct of self-preservation. He pressed hard for a reply, nay an immediate assurance of help. Action, not words, was his pertinent demand.

Burnes was bewildered. He had no authority to say anything in the matter. "But am I to stand by and see us ruined at Kandhar ?" he asked. He took a bold step and decided to take an initiative. Without waiting further for instructions, he informed Kohin Dil Khan on his own authority that in the event of the Shah attacking his territory, the Ameer of Kabul would come to his assistance ; that he would accompany him, and that the British Government would furnish pecuniary assistance. He deputed Lt. Leech to Kandhar to "watch events, gain information and promote the British influence[64]"—instructions as vague as were his own.

In making these promises Burnes exceeded his instructions, and was severely censured by the Governor-General for his promises "most unnecessarily made in unqualified terms[65]. The appointment of Lt. Leech was, however, approved[66]. This censure of Burnes for his Kandhar policy was entirely unwarranted by the merits of the case. The envoy did his best to uphold the honour of his nation and adopted the only course possible under the circumstances. His action becomes all the more commendable, and in conformity with his duties as the representative of his Government, when we know that the British Government had earlier admitted that the "political interest of Great Britian and of British India" lay in the exemption of the countries between India and Persia from foreign aggression from the West[67]. It was with this conviction and assurance in his mind that Burnes acted in the manner he did. With a formidable Russo-Persian combination in the West threatening the integrity of Afghanistan, the British agent had no alternative but to back his diplomacy by substantial promises. The British Government let down their representative at a crucial point, with the result that the Kandhar chiefs, through sheer necessity, threw themselves into the Persian alliance—under a Russian guarantee[68].

Anglo-Russian Tussel at Kabul.

To go back a little, the arrival of Captain Vitkevitch[69], the

Russian envoy to the court of Kabul, had coincided with the visit of the British mission. Captain Burnes in a letter from Kabul dated 20th December, 1837 wrote to inform his Government that "on the morning of the 19th, the Ameer came over from the Bala Hissar with a letter from his son, the Governor of Ghazni, reporting that the Russian agent had arrived at the city on his way to Kabul. Dost Muhammad Khan said that he wished to have nothing to do with any other Power than the British, that he did not wish to receive any agent of any power whatever so long as he had a hope of sympathy from us and that he would order the Russian agent to be turned out, detained on the road or act in the way I desired him...[70]" With rare vision he warned his Government that unless more vigorous proceedings were adopted by it "a Cabinet oriental and dank in its diplomacy would generally endanger English interests in the East[71]."

Persia and Russia had made excellent offers[72], the British Government had made none. The Afghan nation was friendly and so was its chief. The Dost had given abundant evidence of his desire to adhere to the British[73]. He had done all he could, he could go no further. So anxious was he, in fact, to give no offence to the British Government that he sent the letters prepared for the Russian Emperor and Russian Ambassador at Tehran to Burnes and ordered suppression of certain portions at his request[74]. Against all canons of international relations, the Ameer neglected the Russian Ambassador[75], in spite of the fact that Burnes had on 26th January made a declaration to him that he had little to hope from the co-operation of the British Government.[76]

The investment of Herat and the state of affairs on the Western frontier of his kingdom further added to his fears and he asked Burnes for a definite answer till Nauroz[77]. His patience had been taxed to the breaking point. To wait was now fatal. Besides desiring the restoration of Peshawar and the establishment of tranquillity on the Eastern frontier through the good offices of the British, he sought tranquillity on the Western frontier and material protection in the event of war. But before the Nauroz, there reached the fatal letter of January 20, which shattered all hopes of the Ameer and the Sirdars of Kandhar[78]. The Government, as was apprehended, disagreed with Burnes. The Governor-General in India was extremely

sceptical of a Persian invasion of Afghanistan and a Russian agency at Kabul. Lord Auckland, far from the spot, failed to see the situation in the right perspective. He regarded the mission of the Russian agent as unimportant and thought that there was nothing so far to warrant a positive engagement[79]. The Government, therefore, was not prepared under the circumstances, to make more than a conditional offer of friendship[80]. The offer was meaningless. Lord Auckland, on the one hand, demanded the relinquishment of Alliances with the Western Powers and expected, on the other, that the rulers of Kandhar and Kabul would rely on the "moral" influence of Britain. The Ameer could neither expect the restoration of Peshawar nor a positive engagement for assistance in case of an invasion from the West. The Sirdars of Kandhar could not be given a pledge of protection against the Western menace[81]. The Government asked for everything but promised nothing. Burnes was tied hand and foot. "He had no power to treat with Dost Muhammad. All that he could do was to demand on one and refuse on the other." He talked about the friendship of the British Government. Dost Muhammad asked for some proof of it, and no proof was forthcoming. "The wonder is, not that the Ameer at last listened to the overtures of others, but that he did not seek other assistance before.[82]

The result was inevitable. The attitude of the Ameer changed and the Russian envoy so far neglected with contempt was soon to receive the honour and attention[83], due to his high office.

Failure of the Mission

On 26 April, 1838 the leader of the mission left the Afghan capital. Two years earlier he had gone there with great hopes.

The hero of "Travels in Asia", once *persona grata* in the highest society of London and Bokhara, was coming back to India, deeply disappointed. His mission had failed. "What wonder?" asks the author of War in Afghanistan. "It could by no possibility have succeeded. If utter failure had been the great end sought to be accomplished, the whole business could not have been more cunningly devised[84]". The policy of "do nothing" had failed miserably. The Ameer was left disappointed ; the Sirdars of Kandhar were frankly

disgusted ; Persia received a stronger impulse to reaction ; and Russian designs were promoted. The Russians did what the British persistently refused to do. They promised to satisfy all the demands of the Barakzai chief with the result that Kandhar and Afghanistan completely surrendered to the dictates of Russia and Persia.

In April, 1838, Herat on the Western frontier was still being subjected to a vigorous investment by the Persian forces. The fall of this city against a Russo-Persian combination seemed only to be a question of time ; the Kandhar Sirdars and the Ameers of Kabul were in alliance with Russia and Persia. The failure of the mission could not have been more complete.

The Policy that failed.

It will not be out of place at this stage to gauge the policy of Lord Auckland from excerpts from various letters. Here is a *glimpse* of the policy which failed :

1. "The affairs of parties in Afghanistan seem to be such as to preclude the probability for sometime to come of the establishment of a strong and united power in that quarter." Captain Burnes was to communicate the "state of affairs in Afghanistan and instructed to limit himself to matters of commercial interest only[85]."

2. "The Governor-General is satisfied that there is as yet no adequate motive for the interposition of the British power in the contest of the Sikhs and Afghans[86]."

3. "The pretensions of Persia to the sovereignty of Afghanistan appeared to me to be such as were neither called upon by a sense nor permitted by a due regard to our own security to sanction or to allow to declare unequivocally that we regarded the Afghans as an independent people.[87]"

Macnaughten enunciates the policy of the Government of India thus:

"To the degree in which the inducements to court Persia might be diminished and the general tranquillity provoked there would to the

same degree be advantage to the British Government in the absence of agitation from its frontiers in the increased encouragement of commerce".[88] There was no hazard of "embarrassing entanglement in this policy for our measures were to be limited to gradually influencing the proceedings of the several states by their own sense of their real and mutual interest and to the tenders of a friendly mediation. It was our object also to mark our wish for the maintenance in their actual position of all the chiefs of Afghanistan as being the most just course of proceeding in itself and as the existing division of power among them is felt, upon the whole, decidedly the most beneficial for British interests. Positive engagements to assist opposition to actual invasion from the Westward by armies of subsidies have not been contemplated by His Lordship. He is not insensible to such invasion, and he could not and does not seek to anticipate what renders it possible[89]."

The Reason why

The British Government accused Dost Muhammad Khan of insincerity and hurled the whole responsibility on him. It is, no doubt, true that Dost Muhammad was not wholly free from blame; his conduct at times was characterised by a fluctuation which bewildered the British agent[90]; and occasionally he exhibited an inconsistency of purpose which embarrassed the situation[91]. But judging him from the standards of his time, Dost Muhammad was immeasurably superior to his contemporaries in justice[92], patience, sincerity and moderation. His weakness may have in some degree contributed to the failure but the mistakes of the British Government far out-balanced him. The fact that the British Government suppressed those portions of Burnes' letters, which threw a favourable light on the conduct of Dost Muhammad, proves their evil intentions. That they deliberately intended to injure the character of Dost Muhammad is more than evident from these suppressions, which they made with a view to justifying their conduct after the event. The action has been justly condemed in a suitably strong language by Kaye[93].

Burnes' conduct.

Sir. H. M. Durand, while apportioning blame for the failure of

this mission, gives the lion's share to Burnes. "Burnes' ambition", he writes' "was of too hot a flame for the cautious fulfilment of this duty ; and it impelled him to create importance for his mission and himself. Sanguine and credulous, never pausing to weigh events or information, and not gifted with a comprehensive mind, he was easily carried away by the alarm which McNeill and the Home Government rang[94]" It is not possible after the examination of the political correspondence from 1836-38 to believe that he was a man of inordinate ambition, of average ability, and shallow requirements, sanguine in temperament and wanting in self-confidence[95]. Far from being inefficient he was appositely qualified for his duties. In the long series of negotiations that finally culminated in the First Afghan War he played a very creditable part for which he has received a somewhat belated recognition[96]. If he failed in his mission, it was not his fault. Zealous as he was to further British interests, no authority was given to him and far from permitting him independent action, he was actually handicapped by the Government in his work[97]. The Government, it is now established beyond doubt, erred in rejecting his recommendations about Peshawar[98]. He clearly realised, as none other did, that an immediate remedy against intrigue was a means of proving practically to Afghanistan that the British Government sympathised with them and also satisfying the Chief and gaining both the political and commercial ends of Government[99]. Burnes' Kandhar policy[100], the only instance where he acted on his own initiative, was based on a correct appraisal of the needs of the situation. Lord Auckland in a letter to Burnes dated November 5, 1838, said, "I may in candour mention that upon the one point on which there was some difference between us, the proposed advance of money to Kandhar, opinions for which I have the highest respect are in your favour[101]." Here when he used his discretion to an excellent purpose, he was rudely informed that he had exceeded his instructions[102].

Burnes has been charged with misinterpreting information and feeding the alarm of his Government[103]. It is actually alleged that the items of intelligence which he transmitted to the Government of India and a British Minister justified the monstrous policy they followed later[104]. That Burnes charged with high functions of Govern-

ment and entrusted with the welfare of his Government would commit such a gross error as to misrepresent information is unbelievable and more so when it is alleged that he did so to support his own views. It is regrettable that all correspondence from Kabul passed through the Ludhiana agency. "Wade invalidated Burnes' opinion by plausible arguments and contradicted his facts by bold assertions and in this way arrayed Mr. McNeill and Mr. Masson against him.[105]" The two agents, Burnes and Wade were antithetical in their political sentiments. All reports from Burnes were examined and Captain Wade appended his own comments and judgement to them. His reports were invariably coloured by profound animosity towards Dost Muhammad Khan. They were in this form transmitted to the Government and usually found favour with the authorities. In all fairness, this should not have been done. Burnes as the man on the spot should have had more say in matters of policy. His recommendations about the Peshawar question were ignored and were never presented to Ranjit Singh for whom they were meant[106]. If Burnes had been allowed to negotiate independently with Ranjit Singh, he might have affected an amicable settlement between the Sikh ruler and Ameer Dost Muhammad Khan.

The causes of the failure of the mission are many, but the scope of this chapter does not permit a more detailed analysis here. Our last chapter will, however, deal with this aspect.

FOOT NOTES

1. Punjab Government Historical Records, Book No. 142 Serial No. 48.
2. Ibid.,
3. Correspondence, Afghanistan and Persia, 1839 (22nd Aug. 1836).
4. Kay: War in Afghanistan, p. 171.
5. Durand: First Afghan War, p. 38.
6. Kaye: Lives of Indian Officers, Vol, II, p, 249.
7. Ibid., p. 252,
8. For this brilliant suggestion, Dost Muhammad was indebted to Mirza Abdus Sami. (Wade to Macnaughten, 7th June 1836, 142/45) P. G. R.
9. Wade to Macnaughten, 7th June 1836, 142/45, P. G. R.
10. Supreme Government to Burnes, Sept. 5, 1836, 107/13. P. G. R.
11. Vide Goverhment's letter to Wade, 119/62, P. G. R.
12. P. G. R. 142/68.
13. Macnaughten to Burnes, 20 October 1837. 119/18, P. G. R.
14. Burnes to Government, July 31, 1837, 108/27, P. G. R.
15. It is of interest to note here that Mr. Ellis had reported on December 30, 1835 that the Shah of Persia had laid claim to the sovereignty of Afghanistan as far as Ghazni and that he intended to conquer Herat in the spring of 1836 (Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan, 1839).
16. Burnes to Government, August 1, 1837, 108/28, P. G. R.
17. Wade to Government, January 4, February 3, February 13, 1835, Book No. 141, S. N. 1, 6, 9.
18. (a) C. Wade to Supreme Government, June 7, 1836, 142/36, P. G. R.
    (b) Ibid., February 23, 1836, 142/36 V.
    (c) Burnes to Government, February 23, 1836, (Indian Papers (1859).
    (d) Ibid., December 23, 1837.

19. Supreme Government to Wade, September 11, 1837, 119/55. P. G. R.
20. Wade to Supreme Government, August 23, 1837. 144/28. P. G. R.
21. C. Masson's "Narrative of Various Journeys." Burnes' Letter.
22. Supreme Government to Burnes, September, 11, 1837, 119/55, P. G. R.
23. Book No. 107, letter No. 13, September 15, 1836. P. G. R.
24. Supreme Government to Burnes, September 11, 1837, 119/55. P. G. R.
25. J. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 183. "It is hard to say what our Oriental Diplomatists would do if they were forbidden the use of word "commerce". It launched Burnes fairly into the sea of Afghan politics: and then he cut it adrift.
26. Burnes to Wade, Oct. 5, 1837, 108/37, P. G. R.
27. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 171.
28. Burnes to Government, B. N. 108, S. N. 39, P. G. R.
29. *Ibid.*,
30. Burnes to Government, 108/39, P. G. R.
31. See p. 14 and foot note in Chapter 1,
32. Burnes to Government, March 5, 1838, Indian Papers (1859).
33. Burnes to Government, Oct. 5, 1837, 108/39, P. G. R.
34. Ibid.,
35. This statement was supressed. Kaye, op. cit., p. 194.
36. Burnes to Government, October 5, 1837, 108/39, P. G. R.
37. Ibid., September *10, 1837*; 108/35 P. G. R.
38. Government to Wade, November 25, 1837, 119/72, P. G. R.
39. Wade to Government, August 18, 1837, 144/18, P. G. R.
40. Wade to Government, November 7, 1837, 144/49, P. G. R.
41. Ibid.,
42. Burnes to Government, January 26, 1837, Indian Papers (1859).
43. Ibid.,
44. Wade to Government, November 7, 1837, 144/49, P. G. R.
45. Indian Papers (1859), Burnes to Government, January 26, 1837.

46. Indian Papers (1859), Burnes to Government, January 26, 1837.
47. Ibid.,
48. Burnes' comments on the proposal were suppressed.
49. Burnes to Government, January 26, 1837, and Indian Papers (1859), Note : This portion was suppressed.
50. Wade to Macnaughten, 142/49. P. G. R.
51. Government to Burnes, January 20, 1838, 128/1, P. G. R. This letter consisted of 24 paragraphs and no less than 21 were suppressed.
52. Ibid.,
53. Burnes to Government, 31 March, 1838, Indian Papers (1859).
54. Ibid.,
55. Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan, J. McNeill to Palmerston, September 28, 1837.
56. From Burnes to Government, September 9, 1837, 108/34, P. G. R.
57. From Burnes to Government. October 5, 1837, 108/39, P. G. R.
58. Ibid., October 31, 1837, 108/48, P. G. R.
59. Ibid., September 9, 1837, 108/34, P. G. R.
60. Ibid., October 31, 1837, 108/48, P. G. R.
61. (a) "It seems that Kohin Dil Khan, the Chief of Kandhar admits the superiority of Dost Muhammad Khan, and attends to his suggestions at least, if he does not receive his orders." (A) letter from the Ambassador at Herat, 22 January 1837, 119/22) P. G. R.
62. From Burnes to Government, December 4, 1837, 108/60, P. G. R.
63. From Burnes to Government, November 19, 1837, 108/56, P. G. R.
64. Ibid., December 20, 1837, 108/64, P. G. R.
65. (a) From Burnes to Government, December 26, 1837, 108/67 P. G. R.
    (b) Masson's Travels. p. 466.

"I entirely disapproved of his mission but Cap. Burnes persisted it was with the pleasure of the Ameer which nevertheless I could not believe."

66. From Government to Burnes, January 1, 1838, 121/1, P. G. R.
67. Ibid.,
68. Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan.
Government to J. McNeil, November 21, 1836.
69. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 190.
70. Also spelled as Viatewitch. (See Kaye: Op. cit,, p. 185).
71. Book No. 108, Letter No. 64, Kabul, December 20, 1837, paras 3, 4, 5, 6, of this important letter and Dost Muhammad's statements were suppressed,
72. Burnes to Lord Auckland, December 23, 1837, India Papers (1859).
73. "Russia has come forward with offers which are substantial. Persia has been lavish in her promises, and Bokhara and other states have not been backward. Yet, in all that has passed or is daily transpiring the Chief of Kabul declares that he preferred the sympathy and friendly offers of the British to all these offers, however, alluring they may seem for Persia or the Emperor—which certainly places his good sense in a light more prominent . . ."
(Burnes to Macnaughten, December 33, 1837.
Book No. 108, S. N. 68) P.G.R.
74. Indian Papers (1859) Burnes to Government February 18, 1838.
75. Indian Parpers (1859) Burnes to Government, February 18, 1838.
76. (a) Burnes to Government, January 26, 1838 (Indian Papers 1859).
(b) Mohanlal with others, have accused the Ameer of insincerity and duplicity and deliberately wanting to take advantage of the presence of a Russian agent at his court to extort better conditions from the British agency. If Mohanlal's statements be accepted, the Ameer's public conduct and utterances for over a year or more become a trap.

77. Herat, the principal city of Western Afghanistan enjoyed at this time one of the most commanding sites in Central Asia which enabled it to serve as the gate way of Persia, India, Kabul, and Toorkistan.
78. Burnes to Government. February 18, 1838. Indian Papers (1859). It has been suggested that this step was taken under the influence of the Kazilbash party in the Court.
79. Government to Burnes, January 20, 1838, 821/I P. G. R.
80. Ibid.
81. Ibid.
82. Ibid.
83. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 308.
84. Burnes to Government, March 5, 1838 (Indian Papers 1859)
85. Kaye: Vol. I op. cit., p. 297.
86. Macnaughten to Wade 1119/4, P. G. R.
87. „ „ 119/22, P. G. R.
88. „ „ 119/50, P. G. R.
89. „ „ 119/79, P. G. R.
90. Burnes to Government. Indian Papers (1859), See letters dated March 5, 13, 24, and April 28, 1838.
91. Dost Muhammad stated to Burnes that he did not desire the British Government to exercise its good offices for security against the Sikhs of whom he had no apprehension.

    (See Indian Papers (1859), March 5, 1838. Burnes to Government cf. with Dost Muhammad's earlier statements.

    "I wrote to you (the British Government) to restrain the aggression of the Sikhs in this country in whatever way might seem best to you".

    (See 142/36 Dost Muhammad to Wade or 142/48 Dost Muhammad to Auckland), P. G. R.
92. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 123.
93. Kaye: War in Afghanistan Vol. I, p. 203.
94. Sir H. M. Durand: First Afghan War and its Causes.
95. Ibid., p. 34.
96. Kaye to Burnes : "A man much overrated at the start but underrated at the finish".
97. C. Masson's Narrative of Various Journeys, p. 451.

98. Burnes to Government, September 10, 1837, 108/36, P. G. R.

99. Burnes to Lord Auckland, December 23, 1838, Indian Papers (1859).

100. See page 28.

101. Extract from J. Kaye's "Lives of Indian Officers".

102. Government to Burnes, January 21, 1838, 121/1.

103. See foot note 93.

104. C. Masson's "Narrative of Various Journeys".

105. Sir H. M. Durand: First Afghan War and its Causes.

106. Wade to Government, November 7, 1837, 144/49, P. G. R.

CHAPTER 3

Macnaughten's Mission to Lahore and Ludhiana

The failure of Burnes' Mission was a political disaster. It had grave repercussions in India. To the unsophisticated who were following with some interest the work of the Mission in Kabul, its departure in disgrace seemed to be nothing less than a complete break-down of British power and prestige. Wild rumours were circulated, alarm spread in South India; everywhere there was a feeling of general unrest and insecurity. The vernacular press, irresponsible up to the present day, added fuel to the fire by publishing inflammatory articles. "In short", says General Cubbon, "in the village, the bazar, the great man's reception rooms, there was a pleasurable expectation that some novel excitement was about to be felt - an unwelcome evidence indeed of the undisguised eagerness with which the events beyond the frontier were being followed by both literate and illiterate Indian folk.[1]" Among the Mussalman subjects the "feeling was somewhat akin to that which had unsettled their minds at the time when the rumoured advent of Zaman Shah made them look for the speedy restoration of Muhammedan supremacy in Hindustan. In their eyes, indeed, the movement beyond the Afghan frontier took the shape of a Muhammadan invasion, and it was believed that countless thousands of true believers were about to pour themselves over the plains of the Punjab.[2]"

Seige of Herat

The Shah of Persia had laid siege to Herat which was considered to be "of paramount importance for the defence of our country.[3]" In view of the existence of Russo-Persian friendship, this action was clearly a signal for more mischief. If proof was needed, here was a

significant proof of the designs of Russia on British interests.[4] Mr. McNeill, the British envoy at Tehran had always urged on Lord Palmerston that the fall of Herat would destroy British prestige in Afghanistan and place all or nearly all the country under the influence or authority of Russia and Persia.[5] He had advocated even the abrogation of the Treaty of Tehran which was already being flagrantly violated by the Shah.[6] The British Minister at Tehran was instructed to endeavour to dissuade the Shah from such an enterprise, and a warning was sounded that in case he refused to do so, all friendly relations existing between the two Governments would be severed.[7] McNeill's advice for peace and moderation was, however, rejected by the Shah who relied so much on the Russian promises of money and assistance so lavishly given by Count Simonich. After this failure, efforts were made to persuade Shah Kamran to acknowledge submission but unlike Kandhar and Kabul he refused to do so. On 23rd November 1837, in spite of the vehement protests of the British Envoy, the Russian batteries opened fire against the crumbling walls of Kamran's stronghold. Sardar Kohin Dil Khan sent his son with 200 Sardars to aid the Shah.[8]

The siege dragged on for months. Fortunately for the Afghans a young officer of Bombay Artillery, Eldred Pottinger, who had been sent by his uncle Col. Pottinger on a roving mission into Central Asia, reached Herat in good time to bear a positively memorable part in its defence. Before the final assault in June, two attempts, one conducted by Pottinger, the other carried out by McNeill, from the Persian camp had failed[9]. In the latter case McNeill had very nearly succeeded when his Russian rival Simonich reached the Persian Camp just in time to dissuade the Shah from accepting the British offer. After this failure McNeill retired to Baghdad and sent a messenger, Major Todd, to entreat the Governor-General of India to adopt vigorous measures for the intimidation of Persia and the defence of Herat.[10] Nothing short of a march of a British army on Herat, he thought, could prevent the onrushing tide of Russo-Persian invasion.[11]

Roused to action

With the Persian army at Herat and suggestive despatches from

home, with the chatter of diplomats in both continents,[12] with spreading disturbances on the North-West Frontier of India,[13] and finally with the disconcerting report of McNeill that the Shah of Persia, despite the frantic efforts of the Heratees, had successfully fed 48,000 men in his camp before Herat,[14] Lord Auckland was roused to think of measures for Indian defence.

He was at this time unfortunately without his counsellors and was on his way to Simla "which has been the cradle of more political insanity than any place within the limits of Hindustan.[15]" However, on 12th May, he wrote an elaborate Minute in which he clearly set forth his views on the situation. It seemed that three courses were open to him : "the first to combine our defensive measures to the line of the Indus and to leave Afghanistan to its fate, the second, to attempt to save Afghanistan, by granting succour to the existing chiefships of Kabul and Kandhar, the third, to permit or to encourage the advance of Ranjit Singh's armies upon Kabul under counsel and restriction....The first course would be absolute defeat...the second would be only to give power to those who feel greater animosity against the Sikhs than they do against the Persians...and the third course which in the event of the successful resistence of Herat, would appear to be most expedient, would, if the state were to fall into the hands of the Persians, have yet more to commend it, and I cannot hesitate to say that the inclination of my opinion is very strongly in favour of it.[16]" Lord Auckland, while he suggested the restoration of the Sadozai Prince did not definitely envisage at that time the despatch of an army to accomplish his object. He was not even remotely aware of the fatal consequences that this step was about to involve.

"He meditated nothing more at this time (12th May 1838) than the encouragement of an expedition to be undertaken by Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh, the British Government supplying money, appointing an accredited agent to accompany the Shah's camp and furnishing a certain number of British Officers to direct the movement of the Shah's armies.[17]" "All this", says Kaye "is sufficiently moderate, if it is not sufficiently just. The whole question is argued simply as one of expediency. It appears to Lord Auckland to be most expedient to

construct an alliance between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja for the recovery of the dominions of the latter. England was to remain in the background jingling the money bag.[18]"

We have seen the considered views of Lord Auckland in his famous Minute. Let us see the views of different advisers. McNeill wrote : "Though the sovereignty of the Afghans has passed out of the hands of Ahmed Shah's descendants, the Durrani tribe maintains an undoubted ascendancy in the nation. The Barakzais have usurped the greater portion of the powers of the Sadozais; but the latter family still maintains itself in Herat, and has a strong hold on the prejudices, if not on the affections of a large portion of the Durranis. the Barakzais holding Kabul and Kandhar in independence, would not appear to have conciliated the attachment of the Durranis, who depend in a great measure for their power on influence foreign to their tribe. To force their rule, therefore, on the people would be a difficult operation in itself, but, if sought to be effected through the mediation of the British Government, would require a degree of support from us which we cannot give to the present possessor of power in Afghanistan, or to the ruler of Kabul, without bringing new elements of discord into action, productive of more evil to the peace of Afghanistan, and of the whole country, than the preservation of the sovereignty of Afghans in the Sadozai family would be worth.[19]"

Wade suggested, "that the British Government has in its power at any time the restoration of Shah Shuja to the throne of Kabul in concert with Ranjit Singh.[20]" "From the best sources of information open to me" he wrote, "I believe that the Ameer is by no means popular. The greater part of his troops are disaffected and insubordinate[21]".

Masson was even more optimistic : "There is no doubt," he said, "that if on the occasion of Shah Shuja's last attempt on Kabul a single British officer had accompanied him, not as ally and co-adjutor, but as a mere reporter of proceedings to his own Government, his simple appearance would have been sufficient to have procured the Shah's re-establishment.[22]"

Burnes called upon to state his opinion wrote: "The British Govern-

ment has only to send him (Shah Shuja) to Peshawar with an agent and two of its own regiments as an honorary escort, and an avowal to the Afghans that we have taken his cause to ensure his being fixed for ever on his throne. The present time is perhaps better than any previous to it. The Maharaja's permission has only to be asked for the ex-King's advance to Peshawar, granting him at the same time some four or five of his regiments which have no Sikhs in their rank, and Shah Shuja becomes King.[23]"

Thus the general consensus of official opinion was strikingly in favour of Shah Shuja. This predisposition expressed itself significantly in the Minute, the inevitable corollary of which, was the despatch of Macnaughten to Lahore to suitably implement the Governor-General's views. Macnaughten was sent to the Sikh Durbar to negotiate a treaty. His instructions were briefly these :

"Alternative courses were to be laid before the Maharaja. Either the joint treaty executed between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in 1833, when, in conjunction with the former, Shah Shuja had made his last descent on Kabul, should be recognised by the British Government. In that case a Sikh force accompanied by British agents, would advance cautiously on Kabul. At the same time, a division of the British army escorting Shah Shuja, would temporarily occupy Shikarpur in Sind, Money would be advanced wherewith to levy troops and purchase arms, and the services of British officers would be lent him. This failing to meet the Maharaja's consent, he would be allowed "to take his own course against Dost Muhammed without reference to us."[24] "In that case", the document stated, the Shah would return to Kabul only in the event of the Maharaja wishing to make an instrument of him, and in such case, again, only with the utmost assured certainty of success". "His Lordship", it was added, "on the whole is disposed to think that the plan which is second in order to that which will be found most expedient."[25]

The letter of instructions was generally a reiteration of the Minute of May 12, 1838, though it was not its facsimile copy, because the demonstration to be made, by a division of British army at Shikarpur, was a significant departure from the original policy.

Stress was, however, laid on the main purpose of the Minute—the employment of Ranjit Singh as the key note of British Afghan policy. 'The beak of appetite of Ranjit Singh was once again to be tempted by the fruit of conquest and the berries of revanche'.[26] With these instructions, Macnaughten left Simla in the summer of 1838 for Adeenanagar,[27] a village near Batala where the Sikh ruler had temporarily encamped. On the way, he broke his journey, perhaps on account of excessive heat, at Rupar,[28] Kotgarh,[29] Gar Shankar,[30] Hoshiarpur,[31] Hariana,[32] Talipura,[33] etc. He reached his destination on May 30 and was cordially received.[34] Reception being over, he betook himself to one of the mud huts under a mango grove.

Next day the Mission was presented to the Maharaja. "As Macnaughten entered the hall, the aged Prince rose from his seat, and tottering along the whole length of the presence chamber warmly embraced the British Minister, and welcomed the other gentlemen of the mission."[35]

Presents were examined with eager keenness, and conversation 'passed from war to wine, and from learning to hunting, with breathless rapidity.[36]' This interview was not important from the political point of view. Ranjit Singh casually asked about Herat, Dost Muhammad Khan, Russo-Persian influence in Kabul and the probability of their invasion of India. He said 'with an apparent sincerity of tone that he did not see how Russia could entertain a serious design of entering into a contest with the British Government.[37]' Since the conversation was taking place in open Durbar, Macnaughten thought it inadvisable to enter into a fuller discussion but promised to do so "at a private interview."[38]

Negotiating the Treaty

Four days later the opportunity was provided. The British Mission met representatives of the Maharaja.[39] Soon after they were closeted together, arrived His Highness and the fateful conference began. At the suggestion of his master, the doctor-secretary, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din read out the Governor-General's letter for the benefit of the audience, and eloquently explained its various implications. After he had finished, the British envoy was called

upon to state the case for his Government. Macnaughten was in no way inferior to Aziz-ud-Din in his power of expression. He tactfully dilated upon the identity of views of both Governments, explained the conduct of Dost Muhammad (who was maligned and was grossly, misrepresented), and placed the responsibility of the failure of Burnes mission on the shoulders of the Ameer. It is a strange paradox that just at this time when Dost Muhammad was being accused of unreasonableness and refusal to break off negotiations, he was actually making a desperate effort to win back the friendship of the British Government.[40] Macnaughten then dwelt on the resources of the British Government, the irresistible force of 200,000 soldiers, and it was suggested that it was capable of resisting a simultaneous invasion from all four corners of India :

> "If such were the unaided power of the British Government what must that power be" asked Macnaughten, "when united with the strength of the Sikh Empire ?" He assured Ranjit Singh that there was nothing of a palpable character to be apprehended from the movements of the Russians and Persians, or the hostility of the Barakzai Sirdars, but as their intrigues must have the effect of unsettling men's minds, both in the British and Sikh dominions, it was desirable to concert measures for the future suppression of all these disturbing influences".[41]

To ascertain Ranjit Singh's views on this point was the real mission of Macnaughten. Ranjit Singh gave him a patient hearing, interrupting occasionally to express his agreement with the envoy's statements. Asked about his wishes the Sikh ruler replied that his wishes were the wishes of the British Government. Macnaughten, however, made it clear that there were two courses open to the Maharaja, the one was to act independently ; the other to act in concert with the British Government. Ranjit Singh chose the latter course. Macnaughten was startled at this choice, and appealed to the Maharaja not to make a hasty decision :

"Your Highness" he went on to say, "sometimes ago you

formed a treaty with Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk". "Do you think", he asked that "it would be still for your benefit that the treaty should stand good, and would it be agreeable to your wishes that the British Government should become a party to that treaty?"

This", replied Ranjit Singh "would be adding sugar to milk".

At this Macnaughten informed Ranjit Singh of the readiness of the British Government to supply Shah Shuja with money and officers to recover his throne, and communicated to him that it was the wish of the Governor-General that the Shah should advance through Kandhar whilst the Sikh troops should advance on Kabul through the Khyber Pass. "Circumstances", it was added, "might arise to render it necessary for the British Goverment to send some of its own troops down the Indus, to repel any threat of aggression in that direction."[42] "How many?" asked Ranjit Singh. The answer was : "As many as the exigency of the occasion may require, but their employment in that direction will only be temporary."[43] Then were discussed some particulars about the treaty itself. The Maharaja readily agreed to insert the words "with the approbation of, and in concert with the British Government", in the preamble of the Treaty. But being unprepared for and undecided about the four new articles that Macnaughten sought to annex to the Treaty, he left the matter for future consideration. He then asked Macnaughten, "that if one party violates the treaty, will his Government bring the transgressor to book?" Macnaughten readily assured the Maharaja that his Government most certainly would punish the transgressor and that this assurance was to be applicable only to the present rulers and could not, in any case, be extended to their heirs or successors. Having thus satisfied him on this score, Macnaughten reverted to the second plan of acting alone, but Ranjit Singh had already made up his mind : he would not listen to any overtures of an independent expedition. The British envoy grudgingly conceded this but before leaving he secured the Sikh ruler's reluctant acquiescence to two additional articles to the former treaty :[44]

(a) The three powers shall be at liberty to accredit agents at their

respective Courts, whose duty shall be to strengthen the hands of amity and to preserve harmony existing between them, provided, however, that no interference shall be exercised by the officers of any of the three powers with respect to the internal administration of the other.

(b) Shah Shuja binds himself, his heirs and his successors to refrain from entering into negotiations with any foreign state without the knowledge and consent of the British and the Sikh Governments and to oppose any power having the design to invade the Sikh or the British territories by force of arms to the utmost of his ability.[45]

It will not be out of place to point out that the meeting of 3rd June between Macnaughten and Ranjit Singh revealed the unmistakable resolve of the Sikh ruler not to be left alone to face the Afghan forces. It indicated his strong desire to be on friendly terms with his neighbours; and showed his acumen to see clearly through the subterfuge of tangled British diplomacy.

Proposals and Counter Proposals

The Maharaja was indeed sceptical of the success of the expedition. From the very start he was doubtful that the expedition, dependent almost entirely on his own troops, and the hurriedly raised levies of Shah Shuja, could succeed in its mission of restoring the exiled monarch to his lost throne. He sent Fakir Aziz-ud-Din to seek clarification from Macnaughten ; and to ascertain whether or not his Government would support the allies in case of their sustaining reverses at the hand of the enemies. The ready assurance came that it most certainly would but Ranjit Singh, somehow remained unconvinced. He continued to harp on the remoteness of the British resources from the scene of action ;[46] his clear hint to the Britirh Government that their troops should take a more prominent part in the proposed expedition. Moreover, he strongly felt that his share in the spoils was unjustly disproportionate to the share of the danger that he was called upon to face. With the help of his representatives, Fakir Aziz-ud-Din and Govind Das, the Maharaja offered the following conditions for his participation in the proposed struggle :

1. That the British Government shall hold itself responsible for binding Shah Shuja in connection with the Tripartite Treaty.

2. That the share of the Maharaja should be greater in the sum of twenty lakhs proposed by the British Government to be levied from the Amirs of Sindh.

3. The stipulation regarding the evacuation of the Mazari territory be not inserted in the treaty because it was detrimental to his high reputation.

4. The eldest son of Shah Shuja should accompany the army of the Sikhs, so that he should invite and obtain the adherence of the people of the country and settle the affairs of Kabul.

5. Two Aides-de-Camp attached to H. E. the Viceroy should be present with the Sikh army and should remain there until the settlement of the restoration.

6. That the coming and going of the agents of the three states with presents and rarities to and from their respective courts shall prevail.

7. If in the course of the advance of the two States by the road of Sindh and Khyber to Kabul, Dost Muhammad Khan and Kandharis and other Barakzais should offer to submit, the course to be followed in respect of them should be determined.

8. When Kamran's difficulties are removed by the efforts of the two States, he should yearly send five horses of high breed and other presents on a basis of reciprocity.

9. In case Shah Shuja was successfully restored to the throne, the treatment to be meted out to Jubbar Khan, who was well disposed towards the British and Sultan Muhammad

Khan, should be determined.

10. His Highness again stressed his wish to get Jalalabad on account of the fact that he was to bear the brunt of the whole attack.

Macnaughten agreed to all these terms except those concerning Jalalabad and the Maharaja's share in the sum to be furnished by the Ameers of Sind. Regarding the latter, the envoy said that he did not have the discretion to discuss, while to the former question he straightaway refused to listen.[47] The Maharaja insisted on his demand about Jalalabad. So vociferous, in fact, was he that Macnaughten had to shut him up by saying that :

> "Circumstances might occur to render it necessary for us to counteract danger and that if it seriously threatened us we might be compelled to arrest the advance of the Persians by the advance of our own troops and in this case we might find it expedient to support the cause of Shah Shuja."

This statement was made on 19 June, 1838, and the Maharaja left Adeenanagar for Lahore on the same day[48]. It is suggested that his departure was meant to mark his dissatisfaction at the constant refusal of the British Government to concede his demand about the cession of Jalalabad[49]. On 23rd June, four days after Macnaughten had made the statement, Lt. Mackeson, by the express authority of his Chief made a similar statement. This was a significant proof of the abiding interest that the British Government was taking in the affairs of Afghanistan. Ranjit Singh was by now sure in his mind that even if he refused co-operation, the proposed expedition would nevertheless be carried out. He. therefore, told Lt. Mackeson to prepare at once the draft of the treaty. He still clamoured for the cession of Jalalabad ; and with seeming coquetry agreed at last to receive two lacs of rupees in the shape of an annual subsidy, instead of the territorial possession which the British Government had resolutely refused. Macnaughten, not less clever than Ranjit Singh himself, while agreeing to one demand on the part of His Highness made him concede two. They were :

(a) That the reciprocity on the part of Shah Shuja (Article 14) was merely nominal.

(b) As His Highness could under any circumstances keep a large force in Peshawar territories, his holding 8,000 men for the service of the Shah could be of no material consequence to His Highness.

Half consenting, half dissenting the Maharaja gave in at last. The other conditions to which he readily agreed were :

(1) The eldest son of Shah Shuja would be permitted by His Majesty to join the Maharaja's troops and should be treated with honour and respect.

(2) The Shahzada would be allowed to proceed towards Kabul, accompanied by a part of the Maharaja's Muslim troops and by one of the British officers in attendance on the camp, should the Afghans declare unequivocally in favour of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, or should the advance of the Shahzada appear from the circumstances expedient to those officers and the officers who might be appointed with them by the Maharaja.

(3) If Shah Shuja should ask for the aid of Sultan Muhammad's service in his expedition to Kandhar with a view to giving adherence and generally in furtherance of the objects contemplated by the three Powers, the Maharaja would permit the Khan to join His Majesty[50].

The Maharaja received these conditions on June 23 and three days later signed the draft of the proposed treaty.[51] Lord Auckland refused to sign the Treaty unless Shah Shuja appended his signature to the document. Macnaughten, therefore, left for Ludhiana[52] amidst the most profuse expressions of friendship and regard.

From one Court to another

Accompanied by Lt. Mackeson and Captain Wade, Macnaughten reached Ludhiana on 15th July, 1838. The same evening he sought an interview with Shah Shuja. Commencing the Conference, Macnaughten

commented on the unfriendly manner in which Dost Muhammad had dealt with the British Government in 'rejecting our good offices, and paid a tribute to the Shah with whom, he said, his Government had always sympathised and was now prepared to undertake an expedition to restore him to his throne. His Government, he made it clear, would have preferred to act alone in this matter, but since Ranjit Singh was in actual possession of many territories in the North-West, his co-operation, under the circumstances, had become indispensable. He then explained how a treaty had been contracted with Ranjit Singh and expressed the wish of his Government to be a party, with certain modifications, to the treaty of 1833. (Signed between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja). The Shah did not respond to this idea. The envoy caught the hint, and began to read out and explain the clauses of the amended treaty. The King listened with attention ; his comments were frequent and emphatic but the article which evoked his keenest opposition was one concerning the annual payment by Kabul of Rupees two lacs to Ranjit Singh. The Shah contended that if the clause was accepted he would, on restoration, be in an inferior position to Dost Muhammad who paid no tribute to Lahore. This would be extremely derogatory to his honour and dignity. Besides, he added, the scanty revenues of Afghanistan hardly justified the imposition of such a sum; and with staunch opposition in the country he would have to maintain a standing army of at last 15,000 troops on his restoration. He could not, therefore, agree to the proposal.

Macnaughten impressed upon the sensitive Afghan that the sum to be paid was not a tribute and did not in any way make him subordinate to Ranjit Singh. In fact, he said, it so happened sometimes that a stronger state subsidised a weaker one and he cited with great effect the example of his own Government, which had recently paid a subsidy to the Persian State.[53] Indeed, he urged, Ranjit Singh had clamoured for actual territorial concessions at Shikarpur and Jalalabad and that this sum had been substituted as a compensation to the Maharaja for withdrawing his demands on those territories.

After hearing the explanation the Shah gave a somewhat reluctant assent to the article. The rest of the treaty was read and went almost uncommented by the King. After having read the whole treaty,

Macnaughten invited the King to express without reserve his opinion about the document. The exiled monarch spoke with candid frankness :

> He spoke of his long connection with the British Government, of his fortune being entirely in their hands, that in the event of the strained revenue of Kandhar and Kabul being further reduced by the payment of two lakhs of rupees annually to the Sikhs, he must look to support from the British Government to meet and oppose any increased danger from the approach of more powerful enemies from the Westward. On this point full assurance was given him. He then observed that there were one or two other points in which he wished to have assurance given him, and that, in other respects, he was at the disposal of the British Government.[54]

The first issue on which he sought assurance was that the British Government would not seek to interfere with his authority over his tribe and household.[55]

"The reasons of my request with regard to the descendants of the *Durrani Monarch*, their children and relatives as well as the nobles and the subjects of Afghanistan viz. that the English or any one else should not interfere with them is that the people of that country being short-sighted have no discernment. If they find that attention is paid to their words by anyone they open the portals of intrigue and disturbance." "Let it be impressed on the minds of my friends," added the Shah "that no thought of difference ever reflected its rays on the mirror of my heart. My unity and connection with the British Government are like the flesh with the skin."

The second assurance he sought was that he would be allowed to raise a force of his own to go with some show of power, and not as a mere puppet in the hands of the British Government. To this end he asked for permission to start recruiting men.[56]

Full assurance was given to the Shah on these points.

Macnaughten, however, suggested that one of the British officials should stay at his court and that many others should be appointed to discipline and command the Shah's forces during the expedition, and that they

should remain with him after his restoration. The King readily agreed to all these proposals. It was decided that the Shah would advance by Kandhar and his eldest son, Prince Timur, would accompany the Sikh Army through the Khyber Pass.[57]

The work of the Mission was complete. There was little more to discuss and decide. But before finally taking leave, Macnaughten invited the King to give in writing the points on which he demanded assurance from the British Government. Next day a paper was handed over to him. It required that :

1. The British Government should not exercise any influence as regards the descendants of the Durranis and the right of providing for them and the distinction of all the concerned belonged to him alone.

2. After he had been reinstated in Kabul and Kandhar, if he should desire to send an army against Balkh, Seistan, Baluchistan and in their adjacent countries to take possession of them, no resistance would be offered.

3. When Kabul and Kandhar came under his jurisdiction then the dependent villages, which were registered at the time of his Government should remain under his authority.

4. The British Officers should refrain from exercising any authority over the people of Afghanistan, whether soldiers or subjects, without his consent.

5. When he recovered Kabul, then if he desired to retain one of the returning officers as an envoy, and some others for disciplining his army, the British Government would not refuse the favour.

6. He declared his inability to give two lakhs of rupees to H.H., partly due to his slender means and partly because it would be detrimental to his honour.

7. He exhibited his keenness to get back Shikarpur, after recovering Kabul from the Sindhis, who had propitiated it when he was driven out of the country.

8. If any slave girls of his subjects abscond, they shall be sent

back to the Sirkar.[58]

Macnaughten agreed to all these conditions except Nos. 6 & 7. Regarding the Shikarpur question he said that the avowed desire of the Shah was in contravention of the proposed provisions of the new treaty. As regards the subsidy question, he again repeated his arguments he had given in the first meeting; and emphatically impressed upon the Shah that the sum in question was not in the nature of a tribute but was merely a recompense for the services which Ranjit Singh had agreed to render and for the withdrawal of his claim on Jalalabad and Shikarpur. The Shah, not fully satisfied with the explanation, nevertheless, signed the treaty and along with his signature added this significant postscript to the document :

> "After a rehearsal of the treaty and hearing the representations made by the British Officers of high rank, it appeared to me right that in the foregoing enumeration of the objects to be desired, the mention of Shikarpur should not be introduced, and with respect to the objections I have stated to giving two lakhs of rupees to Ranjit Singh in exchange for the services of his troops, as it does not appear to be detrimental to my dignity I have omitted all mention of that also and am now prepared with willingness and satisfaction to sign the treaty."[59]

The work of the Mission was now accomplished. Macnaughten left Ludhiana on 17th June reaching Simla on the 19th when the Governor General appended his signature to the Tripartite Treaty of 1838. The substance of this treaty was an alliance between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja guaranteed by the British Government, and a conjoint expedition into Afghanistan from the two sides of Peshawar and Shikarpur, to be undertaken by the combined armies of Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja. Thus it was little more than a renewed and an enlarged edition of the treaty made between Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja in 1833; the only tangible difference being the participation in it of the British Government to guarantee the Sikh Afghan Alliance.

FOOT NOTES

1. Colvint Colvin. pp. 100-101.
2. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 301.

3. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 212-213.
4. Parliamentary Papers regarding Afghanistan, Macnaughten to McNeill.
5. Parliamentary Papers regarding Afghanistan, McNeill to Palmerston, 11th April 1838.
6. Treaty of Tehran 1814. By its terms all treaties or military cooperation with nations hostile to Great Britain were barred, Persia engaging not only to prevent hostile armies from crossing Persia but to use her influence to induce the rulers of Khiva. Tataristan, Bokhara, and Samarqand to do likewise. In return for these articles the British engaged to pay a subsidy of £ 150,000 per annum and not to interfere in the affairs of Persia and Afghanistan.
7. Parliamentary Papers regarding Afghanistan, Palmerston to McNeiil, July 18, 1838.
8. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, Vol. I. p. 295.
9. Earl of Auckland, Rulers of India Series, L. J. Trotter, pp. 262-263,
10. Parliamentary Papers relating to Afghanistan Mr. McNeill to Palmerston, 11 April 1838. It must be noticed here that on the despatch of Burnes' Mission to Kabul, McNeill wrote a confidential letter to Lord Auckland in which he pleaded that Kandhar and Herat should be entrusted to Dost Muhammad Khan. No other course could make the British positions safe on the west.
11. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 305.
12. Trotter: Lord Auckland. p. 55.
13. Mc Munn: History of Afghanistan, p. 110.
14. Colvin: Colvin. p. 101.
15. Kaye: Op. cit., 305.
16. Minute of Lord Auckland. Unpublished portion Mss records quoted by Kaye.
17. Kaye: Op. cit., pp. 318-320.
18. Kaye: Op. cit., pp. 318-320.
19. Correspondence re. Afghanistan No. 5, p. 20.

(Mohan Lal, Dost Mohammad, p. 366)

20. Wade to Macnaughten, June 7, 1837; 142/136. P.G.R.
21. Colvin, Colvin: pp. 102-103.
22. Ibid.,
23. Colvin, Colvin: pp. 102-103.
24. Ms. Records. quoted by Kaye, op. cit. Vol. I pp. 309-310.
25. Ibid.,
26. Colvin, Colvin: p. 108.
27. Macnaughten to Torrens, May 24th, 1229 P.G.R.
28. Ibid., May 19th 1838; 122/4.
29. Ibid., May 20th 1838; 122/5.
30. Ibid., May 21st 1838; 122/6.
31. Ibid., May 22nd 1838; 122/7.
32. Ibid., May 23rd 1838; 122/8.
33. Ibid., May 24th 1838; 122/9.
34. Ibid., May 30th 1838; 22/15.
35. Ibid., May 31st 1838; 122/16.
36. Ibid.,
37. Wade to Macnaughten, August 17, 1838; 146/21.
38. Macnaughten to Torrens, May 31, 1838; 122/16.

(Notes 28–38: P.G.R.)

39. British representatives were Mr. Macnaughten, Captain Wade and Lt. Osborne. The Sikh representatives consisted of Raja Dhian Singh, Heerat Singh, Lehna Singh, Ajit Singh, Bhai Gobind Ram, Rai Gobind Juo and Fakir Aziz-ud-Din.
40. Kaye: Op. cit, p. 313.
41. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 314.
42. Kaye: Op. cit., p. 314.
43. Ibid.,
44. For the complete treaty please see Appendix.
45. Macnaughten to Torrens. June 3, 1838; 122/19. P.G.R.
46. Macnaughten to Torrens, June 3, 1838; 122/19. P.G.R.
47. Macnaughten to Torrens, June 5, 1838; 122/24. P.G.R.
48. Macnaughten to Torrens, 20 June 1838; 122/32. P.G.R.
49. Kaye : Op. cit, p. 321.
50. Macnaughten to Torrens, June 23, 1838; 122/33. P.G.R.

51. For full treaty please see the Appendix.
52. Macnaughten to Torrens, July 23, 1838; 122/44, P.G.R.
53. Treaty of Tehran, 1814. See foot note No. 6 of this chapter.
54. Lt. Mackeson's Memorandum Ms. records quoted by Kaye op. cit., p. 329.
55. Wade to Macnaughten 6 September 1838; 38146.
56. Lt. Mackeson's Memorandum Ms. records quoted by Kaye, op. cit., p. 329.
57. Macnaughten to Torrens. July 16, P.G.R.)- 121/68. P.G.R.
58. Macnaughten to Torrens. July 16, 1838; 121/68.
59. Macnaughten to Torrens, 18, 1838; 122/46, P.G.R.

CHAPTER 4

Ratification of the Tripartite Treaty

While Macnaughten was negotiating the treaty at Lahore and Ludhiana, the other two secretaries, John Colvin and Henry Torrens, remained at Simla. To a large extent they were responsible for the vigorous policy which was adopted by the Governor-General. It is suggested that John Colvin had a greater share in shaping the policy.[1] Less versatile than Torrens who was adept in the art of amusing Auckland's family (especially Emily Eden, his sister),[2] Colvin possessed a stronger will and a more resolute character and was less worried by doubts and misgivings, an enviable asset for clear thinking. Lord Auckland entrusted himself to the guidance of these 'delusive guides'[3]. He scarcely knew to what extent he was swayed by their counsels, but had he, in compliance with Macnaughten's advice, returned from Cawnpur to Culcutta where a severe famine was raging, and had rejoined his Council there, it is possible that there would have been no Afghan War at all.[4]

It is not our purpose here to apportion blame. We will merely examine the measures taken by the British Government to honour the pledge they gave to Shah Shuja and Ranjit Singh in the Tripartite Treaty. Sir Henry Fane was in 1838 Commander-in-Chief of British forces in India. It is said that he did not approve of the general policy of British interference in the affairs of Afghanistan.[5] In 1837 he had written to Sir Charles Metcalfe :

> "Every advance you might make beyond the Sutlej to the Westward, in my opinion adds to your military weakness... If you want your empire to expand, expand it over Oudh or

over Gwalior, and the remains of Marhatta Empire. Make yourselves the complete sovereign of all within your bounds," he added, "but let alone the Far West".[6]

With his characteristic dislike of half measures, and in pursuance of his duty, Sir Henry Fane not only insisted on the formation of a grand army drawn from the regular British establishment but wished, as the first military authority in India, to determine their number. The army, it was suggested, would march upon Kandhar and perhaps upon Herat itself.[7] Dispatches from home advocated vigorous measures[8] and Lord Auckland, irresolute as he was, yielded to the chatter of diplomats.[9] Such indeed was the transformation wrought in him by the influence of his secretaries and advisers that in 1838 he was firmly convinced of the justice of the cause he was pursuing. On 13th August, 1838, he wrote to the Secret Committee of the Court of Directors :

> "Of the justice of the course to be pursued, there cannot exist reasonable doubt. We owe it to our safety to assist the lawful sovereign of Afghanistan in the recovery of his throne. The welfare of our possessions in the East requires that we should in the present crisis of affairs, have a decidedly friendly power on our frontiers. The operations which we are about to commence, will doubtless be attended with much expense but this consideration must, I feel assured, be held comparatively light when contrasted with the magnitude of the object to be gained which is no less than a barrier to all encroachments from the westward." "I have acted in a crisis[10]," he wrote in the same communication, "which has suddenly arisen and at a period when appearances in every quarter were the most threatening to the tranquillity of the British Indian Empire, in the manner which seemed to me essential to conserve the safety and assert the power and dignity of our Government. I have in adopting this step been deeply sensible of the responsibility which it places on me, but I have felt after the most anxious deliberation that I could not otherwise acquit myself of the trust.[11]" To Hobhouse he wrote on 23rd August, 1838. "I am sensible that my trans-Indus arrangements are

in many points open to objection but I had no time to pause: there was no choice but between them and the more objectionable danger of remaining passive to a friendly power, and intimate connection in Afghanistan, a peaceful alliance with Lahore and established influence in Sind are objects for which some hazard may well be run.[12]"

An order was, therefore, issued for the assembling of a grand army on the frontier. In August, the regiments selected by the Commander-in-Chief were asked to keep themselves in a state of preparedness and on 13th September the Commander-in-Chief published a general order "bringing the different components of the force, naming the Staff Officers and ordering the whole to rendezvous at Kurnaul.[13]"

The news of the expedition caused a thrill throughout India. Peace had prevailed for a long time, but it was only to prove to be the traditional calm before the storm. The prospects of war aroused eager expectancy in every one's heart. Calm had reigned in military circles since the reduction of Bhurtpore, and now though the cause was far from being popular, yet "there was scarcely a mess table in the country at which the political bearings of the invasion of Afghanistan were not discussed without eliciting the plainest possible indication that the sympathies of our officers were rather with the Barakzai Chief than the Sadozai monarch [14]"

Qazi Abdul Samad of Peshawar wrote to inform Major Wade in an undated letter that Dost Muhammad Khan was much disturbed in consequence of the news of this expedition.[15] The army warned for field service consisted of a brigade of artillery, a brigade of cavalry and five brigades of infantry. The Bengal army was assembling on the northern frontier of India under the personal command of Sir Henry Fane and another force was assembling in Bombay under the command of Sir John Keane.

With these British forces were to go the levies of Shah Shuja. The exile, hitherto sunk in obscurity and unknown to most of the people in Ludhiana, became all of a sudden the centre of much attention as the recognized King of Afghanistan.

He, in fact. became so eager to recover his lost throne that every moment which passed between the signing of the treaty and the actual commencement of the expedition, seemed to drag and weigh heavily on his nerves. He was anxious to move at once, but it was plain that he could not move without an army; and so he set about earnestly to the task of collecting one. We noticed in the last chapter how Shah Shuja had insisted on being allowed to work independently or at least so to manoeuvre things as to impress the people about the independence of his expedition. But in practice it was no easy matter for the British Government at this time to comply with the request of the King, who wished to have everything done for him, and yet to appear as though he did it himself."[16] Macnaughten, therefore, wrote to Wade who had been entrusted with the difficult and delicate duty of managing the Shah that :

> "He (Shah Shuja) should be given to understand that with the exception of a small Body of Household Troops, it will be expected that all his levies be subjected to British and that in all matters connected with the formation of the Force the advice and opinion of the officers appointed by the British Government to command may be followed.[17]" In the same letter Macnaughten wrote to the Agent that 'Shah Shuja-ul Mulk will immediately commence raising his levies and will be joined at Ludhiana or Ferozepur as may be determined by the officers who are to accompany him.After a sufficient force has been raised the Shah will proceed to Bahawalpur where he will doubtless be joined by a considerable Body of the Chief's troops, and His Majesty will then prosecute his march towards Shikarpur at which place it may be expected that he will arrive about the 1st of November next.[18]"

In the meanwhile Lord Auckland mapped out a far more extensive scheme of invasion than had been envisaged before. It was decided that a British Envoy should accompany Ranjit Singh's troops by the Peshawar route and that another should accompany Shah Shuja's Camp on its march to Afghanistan. Captain Wade was commissioned to do this work. He was to accompany Prince Timur, the eldest son of the Shah; and was to make it clear that Ranjit Singh

was acting only as Shah Shuja's ally. It remained yet to be seen who would take charge of directing the mind of Shah Shuja, and shaping, in all beyond the immediate line of military operations, the course of this great campaign.[19]" Captain Burnes, it seemed, with a profound experience of the country which was about to be traversed by the British forces, would be the inevitable choice as an Envoy. On 22nd July he was already writing to a friend :

> "If full confidence . . . be any pledge, I am to be chief. I can plainly tell them that it is *aut Caesar aut nullus* and if I get not what I have a right to, you will soon see me *en route to* England."[20]

Burnes, however, was not given what he said, "I have a right to" and more than that he did not proceed "en route to England". Mr. H. W. Macnaughten was appointed "Envoy and Minister on the part of the Government of India at the Court of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk" and Burnes was given a subordinate position at working "under Mr. Macnaughten's directions as Envoy to the Chief of Kalat or other states." What reconciled him, however, to this subordinate position was the belief that Macnaughten would return to India leaving him in the supreme position at Kabul. Burnes left for Sind where he was sent in advance to pave the way for the progress of the Shah and his forces. Macnaughten remained in Simla to help his Chief prepare a paper than which a "more remarkable document has not been issued from the Council Chamber of an Anglo-Indian Viceroy since the English in India first began the work of King-making."[21]

The Simla manifesto

On 1st October, 1838, was issued the document which was the result of deep thought and shrewdness :

> "The Right Hon'ble the Governor-General of India", it said "having with the concurrence of the Supreme Council directed the assemblage of a British Force for service across the Indus. His Lordship deems it proper to publish the following exposition of the reasons which have led to this important measure . . .

"After much time spent by Captain Burnes in fruitless negotiation at Kabul it appeared that Dost Muhammad Khan chiefly in consequence of his reliance upon Persian encouragement and assistance, persisted, as respected his misunderstanding with the Sikhs, in urging the most unreasonable pretentions, such as the Governor-General could not, consistent with justice and his regard for the friendship of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, be the channel of submitting to the consideration of H. H ; that he avowed schemes of aggrandizement and ambition, injurious to the security and peace of the frontiers of India, and that he openly threatened, in furtherance of those schemes, to call in every foreign aid which he could command. Ultimately he gave his undisguised support to the Persian designs in Afghanistan, of the unfriendly and injurious character of which, as concerned the British Government Power in India, he was well apprized and by his utter disregard of the views and interests of the British Government ; compelled Captain Burnes to leave Kabul without having affected any of the objects of his mission. The hostile policy of the Chief (Dost Muhammad) showed too plainly that, so long as Kabul remained under his Government, we could never hope that the tranquillity of our neighbourhood would be secured, or that the interests of our Indian Empire would be preserved inviolate . . . It had been clearly ascertained, from the information furnished by the various officers who have visited Afghanistan, that the Barakzai Chiefs, from their dissension and unpopularity, were ill fitted, under any circumstances, to be useful Allies to the British Government and to aid us in our just and necessary measures of national defence . . .

"After serious and mature deliberation, the Governor General was satisfied that a pressing necessity, as well as every consideration of policy and justice, warranted us in espousing the cause of Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk whose popularity throughout Afghanistan had been proved to His Lordship by the strong and unanimous testimonials of the best authorities."[23]

The other side of the medal

The manifesto was widely circulated both in the Indian and the European press :

> There was not a sentence in it that was not dissected with an unsparing hand. If it were not pronounced to be a collection of absolute falsehoods, it was described as a most disingenuous distortion of the truth.[24]

The siege of Herat and the failure of Burnes' mission were inextricably mixed up in the Manifesto but with all the cleverness and cunning displayed in its drafting, the strange logic of the fact that since Muhammad Shah had made war upon Herat, England was justified in invading Afghanistan; was not clear to even the most sympathetic reader.

The manifesto opens with a lie; it was never approved or consented to by the Supreme Council and yet a public man of Lord Auckland's high standing had the audacity to say so without feeling in the least any pang of conscience, or fearing whatever the verdict of the evidence, which he knew was there, to condemn him and contradict his presumptuous assertion. He had made the siege of Herat the main cause of the expedition, but the irony of the whole situation was that the Persians had raised the siege even before the publication of this Manifesto. On 9th September, Muhammad Shah had turned towards his capital and after this date no justification, whatever, remained for his expedition. By no stretch of imagination could he make out a case for this expedition after 9th September. Why then an expedition, the object of which had already been achieved, was undertaken at all ?

The main concern of Lord Auckland, as is clear from the Manifesto, was to counteract the danger from the North West ; but when the Persians retreated, the Russian bogey automatically disappeared. The Russian fear and danger which had loomed large for ten years on the N.W. Frontier was no more, at least for the time being. Moreover, Russia, partly owing to diplomatic pressure exerted by Britain and partly due to the re-opening of the Eastern

Question in Europe, disavowed the acts of its own emissaries. In other words, the N.W. menace had completely melted away and there was absolutely no need for a policy of direct intervention in the affairs of Afghanistan. But Auckland, despite the enormous change in circumstances persisted with inexplicable stubbornness, and carried out his scheme of intervention in the teeth of opposition by eminent politicians.[25] On 8th November he announced to the world that the proposed invasion of Afghanistan, regardless of the changed circumstances, would still be carried out with a view to substituting a friendly for a hostile power in the Eastern provinces of *Afghanistan* and to establish a permanent barrier against schemes of aggression upon our North West Frontier. This act of the Governor-Generel was at once a folly and a crime. A folly because even a man in the street would have seen that after its object had been achieved, it was sheer obstinacy to send this expedition ; and a crime because the Tripartite Treaty did not pledge the British Government to send a single soldier beyond the frontier, The despatch of British forces to invade a neighbouring country which had done all it could to maintain friendly relations with India, was no part of the treaty. It was wholly an after thought, it was not at all an obligation of the Indian Government ; it was their deliberate choice, and today they stand accused before the world for making an unwarranted and an ill-meaning choice.

FOOT NOTES

1. Kaye : War in Afghanistan.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., p. 319.
4. Miss Eden: Up the Country.
5. Kaye, War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 345.
6. Life of Lord Metcalfe. Vol. II p. 306.
7. Kaye : Op. Cit., p. 345.
8. Trotter, Lord Auckland, Rulers of India Series, p. 55.
9. MacMunn: History of Afghanistan, p. 110.
10. Parliamentary Papers re : Afghanistan, Auckland, to Secret Committee, dated 13 May 1838.
11. Ibid.

12. Brititish Museum Add. Ms, 37694, p. 21, quoted in Cambridge History of India, Vol. VI. p. 49.
13. Kaye: War in Afghanistan, Vol. I. p. 346.
14. Ibid., p. 347.
15. P.G.R. 146/125.
16. Kaye: Op. Cit., p. 349.
17. Macnaughten to Wade. 69/121. } P.G.R.
18. Ibid., } P.G.R.
19. Kaye: Op. Cit., pp. 351-352.
20. Private Correspondence of Sir A. Burnes, quoted by Kaye, op. cit., p. 352.
21. Kaye: Op. Cit., pp. 354-355.
22. P.G.R. 123/121.
24. Kaye: Op. Cit., pp. 360-361.
25. Among them were the Duke of Wellington, Lord Wellesley, Mr. Elphinstone and Sir Charles Metcalfe. The Duke of Wellington said that our difficulties would commence where our military success ended. Lord Wellesley always spoke contemptuously of the folly of occupying a land of rocks, sands, deserts, ice, and snow. Sir Charles Metcalfe protested from the very outset and said that the expedition would be disastrous. Ms correspondence quoted by Kaye, pp. 363-464. (War in Afghanistan, Vol. I.)

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CHAPTER 5

Reflections

War was declared on Afghanistan. It proved futile. The object of the expedition was ignominiously defeated. Who was responsible for this disaster? Who caused avoidable destruction and why? Pertinent questions are these but difficult to answer. Different historians have blamed different quarters. The dock is overcrowded-Burnes, Dost Muhammad, Palmerston and his associates, Auckland and his secretaries; but let us patiently go through the somewhat tiresome proceedings.

I

Burnes, mission to Kabul was a political mission[1] with a commercial mask which could not be long maintained. Hitherto the policy of the British Government had been to preserve intact the independence of Afghanistan, and to maintain friendly relations with her. But this friendly policy was thrown overboard. Lord William Bentinck, far from showing any friendly inclination towards the Barakzai Sirdars actually suffered Shah Shuja to raise in 1833 and 1834 an army of invasion under the very shadow of the Union Jack. Lord Auckland's Afghan policy was only a continuation of the policy of Lord William Bentinck; it has been summed up by Colvin in a sentence :

> He could only trust that Ranjit Singh would contine to be friendly, that the Amirs of Sind would show themselves amenable to his agent, above all, that Dost Muhammad would fall into his plans, and thus enable him to complete the protection of his frontier, and to exchange guarantees

of mutual assistance with the group of States between the Sutlej and Central Asia.

The Russian intrigues and the Persian threat were stated to be the ostensible causes which prompted the forward policy. But these fears were best removed by the establishment of a strong Government beyond the Khyber. With rare foresight Burnes saw the wisdom of this policy and advocated the establishment of unity, cohesion and a strong rule in Afghanistan. His advice, however, fell on deaf ears ; and the claim of an imbecile aspirant to the Afghan throne was championed with great zeal and little reason. The expedition was doomed to failure. Burnes has been charged of so working up the situation as to be responsible for the final blast which blew everything. He is accused of being "a man of inordinate ambition, and shallow requirements, sanguine in temperament and wanting in self-control and hence his selection for a delicate task was inopportune, inept and melapropos."[2] Durand supports this charge by enumerating the following indiscretions alleged to have been committed by Burnes :

(a) While on the road to Kabul, he wrote letters to Dost Muhammad and Akbar Khan remonstrating against the renewal of hostility with the Sikhs which prematurely apprised Dost Muhammad of the camouflaged object of the mission.

(b) Burnes unreservedly laid open to Dost Muhammad the importance attached by the English to the Persian march on Herat and the consideration with which it invested Afghanistan, and Dost Muhammad, conscious of the credulity of the British Agent, nourished hopes of being able, through him, to act upon the fears of the Anglo-Indian Government.

(c) Burnes' pre-possession in favour of Dost Muhammad.

(d) Burnes exceeded his instructions when he offered to Kandhar Chiefs an inconsiderate offer of Rupees three lakhs to make head against Persia.

(e) On account of the lack of diplomatic caution in Burnes. Ranjit Singh became aware of what transpired at Kabul.

(f) Dearth of decorum in Burnes.

(g) The ludicrous excitement betrayed by Burnes on the arrival of the Russian Officer, Vicovitch.

(h) He appointed a young, indiscreet, indecorous creature like Lt. Leech, as Agent at Kandhar.

(i) Burnes' hasty and injudicious departure from Kabul.[3]

It seems Durand is an aesthete of high order and has an eye for decorum. We do not, however, know his concept of decorum. The charges he has levelled against Burnes betray a sense of vigour and vengeance, unbecoming of an historian. His invective against Burnes is not to be swallowed easily. The first charge does not take account of the fact that Ameer Dost Muhammad was fully cognisant of the ulterior motives of the mission much before it arrived in Kabul, and that Burnes did not let the cat out of the bag; it was already mewing, perhaps a bit too violently when he entered the Oriental Court. The second charge obviously contradicts itself. It was not Burnes who attached importance to the Persian march on Herat, but the higher authorities in England and India who dictated the policy, and determined this attitude. Burnes was only acting as a representative and a spokesman of his country, and as such he put the official views of his Government before the Ameer, to whose court he had gone as a virtual Ambassador. Had he not faithfully performed his duty, and had he expressed views other than those held by his Government, he would have been charged of treason and treachery. He cannot, therefore, be reasonably accused of not performing his duty as a spokesman of his Government. The third charge—Burnes' pre-possession in favour of Dost Muhammad—is not borne out by facts. The facts are simple. Burnes came into contact with Dost Muhammad and found him to be most reasonable and responsive to the British demands. In face of seductive temptations from other quarters, the Ameer clung to his desire for a British alliance. Burnes truly wrote :

> "If half you must do for others were done for him, he would abandon Russia and Persia tomorrow."[4]

Burnes' only partiality to the Ameer is that he found him abundantly sincere and faithful, and that he committed the indiscre-

tion of saying so. If a person who is deputed by his Government to report on a situation can be accused of accurate reporting, Burnes stands condemned. What did the Government mean by suppressing the dispatches of Burnes which presented Dost Muhammad in a favourable light? What was the aim of the distortion of truth? The Government evidently did not have an open mind and harboured evil intentions against Dost Muhammad from the very outset. By no stretch of imagination can facts be so distorted as to prove Burnes' pre-possession towards Dost Muhammad. On the contrary it must be remembered that Kabul correspondence passed from the Ludhiana Agency, and that Burnes' despatches were annotated with innumerable notes by Wade; and these notes were almost invariably against Dost Muhammad. The disunity of Afghanistan was recommended; the aggrandizement of Ranjit Singh was encouraged; and above all a malicious suggestion of an alliance against Dost Muhammad was thrown to the Governor-General. And yet in the face of this evidence Durand accused Burnes of pre-possession towards Dost Muhammad, who was more sinned against than sinning. If the Government of India could not entertain a proposal which did not readily fall in with their pre-conceived plan, if they did not have an open mind and had finally determined their attitude towards the Ameer; it was sheer folly to have despatched the mission to Kabul. They might as well have sent the expedition they sent two years later. It would not have made much difference because the expedition was as unjust in 1836 as it was in 1838.

The fourth item on the charge sheet is that Burnes exceeded his instructions by offering 3 lakhs of rupees to the Kabul chiefs. But where is the crime? The instructions were vague, the situation called for immediate action.[5] Was Burnes to stand by and "see us ruined at Kandhar?"[6] If the forward policy preached at this time from London and Tehran was the only way of counteracting the Russian intrigue, this action, far from being a mistake, should be considered a step in the right direction. Lord Auckland's Government should have been pleased with their agent's action in strengthening the Ameer's hands against Persia at no great cost to the Indian treasury. The censure of Burnes for his Kandhar policy is uncalled

for and entirely unwarranted by the merits of the case. The envoy did his best to uphold the honour of his country and adopted the only possible course under the circumstances. His action becomes all the more commendable, and in conformity with his duties as a representative of his Government, when we know that the British Government had earlier admitted that, "the political interest of Great Britain and of British India", lay in the exemption of the countries between India and Persia from "foreign aggression from the west[7]." With a formidable Russo-Persian combination in the West threatening the integrity of Afghanistan, the British agent had no other alternative but to back his diplomacy by substantial promises.

The fifth indiscretion is easily explained. We must not forget that Ranjit Singh got most of his news from the agency of Sultan Muhammad Khan and sometimes even the Ludhiana agency communicated news to him.

The sixth charge is both interesting and amusing. Burnes' betrayal of excitement at the arrival of the Russian envoy was significantly symptomatic of the contemporary climate. If the atmosphere was charged with Russophobia, it was not the fault of Burnes, nor was it his fault when he failed to act as a hypocrite and gave expression to his anxiety which he sincerely felt.

Regarding the next charge—the dearth of decorum—it is really the greatest disqualification for an Ambassador. But when his selection was made, he was showered with praises, perhaps too much recognition was given to Burnes at the start, and as a reaction he was equally underrated at the finish. But there is no doubt that if he could provoke so much admiration in India, London and Bokhara, he must have possessed the minimum decorum necessary for attaining such distinction and moving in the society of kings and nobles.

Finally his "hasty and injudicious" departure from Kabul was in obedience to the Governor-General's instructions contained in his letter of 21st February 1838. The prolongation of his stay would have served no purpose under the circumstances. Calcutta had precipitated the final breach between India and Afghanistan. Dost Muhammad had made his last desperate effort of 6th March

and had failed. Burnes was tied hand and foot. He asked Kabul for everything but could not give anything in return. His recommendations about Peshawar had been rejected. There was no common ground to meet upon. Burnes had suffered enough indignities at the hands of his own Government ; time and again he was let down. What could he do by prolonging his stay under the circumstances?

II

Let us now examine the conduct of Dost Muhammad Khan, the Ameer of Kabul. It has been said that his attitude was uncompromising and that he did not want to arrive at a settlement, but was using the hideous methods of *intimidation* and was, in fact, exploiting the whole situation to his own purpose. There is no doubt that he is not wholly free from blame, that his conduct was at times characterised by a fluctuation which bewildered the British Agent,[8] and occasionally he exhibited an inconsistency of purpose which embarrassed the situation.[9] But we must judge the man by the standards of his own time. He was immeasurably superior to his contemporaries in justice, patience, sincerity and moderation. The most outstanding charge against him is that he asked for more than could be reasonably granted to him, and that he had absolutely no right to look for the restoration of Peshawar which had become Sultan Muhammad's possession since the dismemberment of the Durrani Empire.

It is not difficult to imagine that the possession of Peshawar by Sultan Muhammad was gravely inimical to the basic interests of Ameer Dost Muhammad because Sultan Muhammad was a protege of Ranjit Singh, and he might have become the stalking horse of the ambitious Maharaja, whose eastward expansion had been stopped and who would have inevitably extended his dominions towards the North-West, the only possible outlet in his reach. It was the martial power and personal valour of Dost Muhammad that had secured the supremacy of Barakzai in Afghanistan; and as Sultan Muhammad lacked the ability or the honesty to hold it, it was but natural that Dost Muhammad should make arrangement

for preserving the integrity of the Afghan frontier. To Dost Muhammad the question of Peshawar was not only a question of political honour. He went very far to reconcile the other party. He even agreed to hold Peshawar conjointly with Sultan Muhammad in vassalage to Ranjit Singh.[10] He expressed his readiness to confirm the Sultan in the possession of Jagirs granted to him by Ranjit Singh.[11] Convinced of his sincerity and surprised at his moderation Burnes forwarded to his Government his recommendations about Peshawar for submission to the Lahore Court. Curiously enough, these proposals were not submitted to Ranjit Singh for Wade did not think they would be seriously and sympathetically considered by the Maharaja.[12] The action becomes all the more indefensible when we know that the Supreme Government[13] and the Ludhiana Agency[14] were in complete accord with these recommendations. Had Burnes been given the authority to communicate directly with the Lahore Durbar he might have succeeded in finding a peaceful solution of the Peshawar problem. Had the British Government tried to find an amicable settlement, there is no doubt that Dost Muhammad would have rejected all overtures from the West and would have chosen to remain a faithful ally of the British Government. We have it on the authority of the British envoy at Kabul that the Chief "declared that he preferred the sympathy of the British to all other offers, however alluring[15]..."But the Indian Government offered him nothing but their sympathy. The Government which understood so well the value of the Punjab connection failed to understand the advantages of conciliating Afghanistan. All the time the Ameer felt that he was being grossly neglected.[16] He remarked poignantly "that I have done something that I should not have done,[17]" but there was no response from India. The Government remained adamant, Auckland wrote to Sir John Hobhouse on 9th April : "It would be madness in us, though we may wish to see his (Ameer's) independence assured, to quarrel with the Sikhs for him[18]." The intention of Auckland may similarly be discerned in these remarks :

1. Do not do or say anything that might incense the Sikh ruler.[19]

2. Encourage the proposal from the Maharaja for interview with the Governor-General.[20]

3. The Governor-General is satisfied that there is as yet no adequate motive for the interposition of the British power in the contest of the Sikhs and Afghans.[21]

It is evident that Auckland did not favour a compromise on the issue and followed a policy of undiluted hostility to Dost Muhammad on this question. Perhaps the political situation in the Punjab necessitated this course of action. Ranjit Singh was an ally "more powerful, more faithful."[22] Ever since 1800 he had scrupulously adhered to his treaty obligations. Lately his designs on Sind had been frustrated, and it was now dangerous to check him again on the North West. The value of Sikh alliance had been proved while Dost Muhammad had yet to be tried.

> It was not worthwhile to jeopardise that alliance for the support of Dost Muhammad, who though an able ruler and as events were to prove, really desirous of a treaty with the British was less known to us at the time.[23]

Last but certainly not the least, the British hoped to occupy Peshawar as a result of the tumultuous confusion that they thought would follow the death of the age-stricken Maharaja of the Punjab.[24]

All these sentiments are laudable and the diplomatic reticence really credible, but the failure to sense the fact that without much pressure Ranjit Singh could be easily brought to surrender Peshawar which was a burden to him, suggests the unimaginative character of a man who was then at the helm of affairs in India. A man with greater will power could have brought round Ranjit Singh to surrender Peshawar for tribute from Kabul ; but if Auckland's scrupulous conscience could not allow him to acquiesce in the suggestion to put pressure on Ranjit Singh, there was surely another way in which the Afghan alliance could have been secured. Indeed there was one common point where the interests of British India and Afghanistan were completely identical. And that was the guarantee for the protection of Kabul and Kandhar against Russo-Persian aggression. It was in the mutual interest of the Ameer and Auckland to protect these territories from foreign annexation or aggression,

Had Lord Auckland given solid guarantees for their protection there was every likelihood of a conciliation between India and Afghanistan. But Auckland was always hesitant, and in fact never fully explored the possibilities of this alternative. The importance of Ranjit Singh was rightly emphasised ; but the importance of Dost Muhammad was wrongly belittled.

The Ameer did all he could to befriend the British. No man could have done more under the circumstances. The height of humility was reached on March 6, 1838, when he said, "I throw myself on the generosity of the Governor-General of India.[25]" Dost Muhammad promised to sever all connections with Persia ; to dismiss the Russian Agent, to surrender all claims to Peshawar, to live on friendly terms with Ranjit Singh, and to co-operate in arrangements to unite the Barakzais.[26] He made an incredibly extravagant bid for British friendship. The paltry price he asked for was an assurance in writing that the British Government would endeavour to get altered the state of things in Peshawar. Even this was denied him. Is there any wonder then if he broke off? "The wonder is not that the Ameer was so exacting but that he was so sincere, so straighforward and so moderate."[27]

The Afghan Chief was declared hostile and untrustworthy. The establishment of friendly relations with countries other than Britain was not a crime for an independent ruler; and then Dost Muhammad had been driven to contract Russo-Persian alliance by the attitude of the Indian Government themselves. Even if that were not the case, he had a perfect right to choose his friends ; and yet it was precisely for the exercise of that right that he was chastised. If ever Neitzsche's cynical saying that one is punished best for one's virtues was applicable, it applies most aptly in this case.

III

A new leaf was turned in the history of Anglo-Afghan relations after the departure of Burnes from Kabul. Who prevailed upon Lord Auckland to adopt the vigorous forward policy? Who suggested that Dost Muhammad should be abandoned for that imbecile

Sadozai who was the prisoner-guest of the Government at Ludhiana? From whom did the destructive policy which Auckland followed emanate? "Macnaughten, Colvin, Torrens, Torrens, Colvin. Macnaughten . . . that is the tune of the whole song."[28]

These were the people who hammered the policy and paved the way for the expedition which went later to Afghanistan. These people exercised a tremendous influence on the policy of Auckland. Kaye says that "on the departure of the mission for Ludhiana (July 13) Burnes had proceeded to join Lord Auckland and his advisers for Simla, and when he arrived there, Torrens and Colvin came running to him and prayed him to say nothing to unsettle his Lordship's mind, they had all the trouble to get him into business and that even now he would be glad to retire from it."[29] This allegation is, however, not proved. Sir Auckland Colvin, the son of Lord Auckland's Private Secretary John Russel Colvin, refutes Kaye's contention which is in turn based on Masson's evidence. His arguments are :

(a) Burnes' arrival at Simla on July 13, was contrary to Lord Auckland's expectations, who looked for him on July 17 or 18.

(b) Dr. Buist, author of 'Outlines of the operations in Sind and Afghanistan,' repeating the story says that Masson was not a very trustworthy authority.

(c) Kaye admits that for a long time he was himself very sceptical of its truth and does not even vouch for it.

(d) Mr. Torrens gave this anecdote a prompt contradiction. Mr. Colvin to his last hour never opened his lips on any one matter which had passed through his hands, while he had the post of Private Secretary.[30]

It is perhaps impossible to decide as to who among this "Triumvirate" was more responsible, who was less, and who was not at all responsible for shaping the policy under discussion. The best conclusion is that of Archbold who says, "How much

the fault lay with Macnaughten, Torrens and Colvin, whom he chiefly relied upon, will probably never be settled."[30] It is nevertheless true that the fault was not entirely Auckland's.

Lord Palmerston and his facile instrument, Sir John Hobhouse, have also to share the blame. They in fact were the prompters of Russophobia in Excelsior. The epitome of Palmerston's position and sentiments may be discerned in the Secret Committee's despatches of June 25 and October 24 of 1836 ; in his appointment of the prominent Russophobe McNeill at Tehran; in his private letter to Lord Melbourne on October 31, 1838, and finally in Hobhouse's assumption of full responsibility for the Afghan War; and in the deliberate connivance of the ministry of even the most objectionable acts of Lord Auckland.[31]

Ferrier, the author of the History of the Afghans, and Auckland Colvin have endeavoured to justify the conduct of Lord Auckland. They throw the whole blame on the Home authorities. In support of their connection they quote the Secret Committee's letter of June 25. The letter instructed Auckland, "to judge as to what steps it may be proper and desirable for you to take to watch more closely than has hitherto been attempted the progress of events in Afghanistan and to counteract the progress of Russian influence in a quarter which from its proximity to our Indian possessions could not fail if it were once established to act injuriously on the system of our Indian alliances and possibly to interfere even with the tranquillity of our own territory."[32]

There is no doubt that Palmerston was the arch anti-Russian, and that the Home authorities in general were anxious for the safety of India against the Russo-Persian menace. But there is nothing to indicate in the letter quoted above, that a hazard of such a vast magnitude that Auckland risked, should at all be undertaken. Moreover, even the anti-Russian Palmerston would not have sanctioned the expedition after the momentous event of 29 September, 1838. That put an end to the Russian menace, and the opening of the Eastern question in Europe automatically postponed the possibility of its revival for a very long time to come.

If Lord Auckland had been left to himself and had not allowed himself to be made a scape-goat by his irresponsible advisers (to defend whom Auckland Colvin had written the book) the expedition might have been abandoned. But one cannot believe that Auckland was acting on instructions sent to him day by day by the Home authorities and was utterly powerless to act. There is no evidence to warrant this conclusion.

IV

Whatever the faults of other people, Lord Auckland's weakest point was his vacillation and inability to stick to a thing. He took up the cause of Shah Shuja without realizing that his popularity existed mainly in his own assurances and the sanguine prophecies of his credulous partisans. The signing of a pact of aggression against an independent neighbouring ruler was nothing but high-handed robbery. The abandonment of Dost Muhammad was a mistake, the choice of Shah Shuja was a blunder; and the despatch of an expedition against Dost Muhammad was at once a crime. The Tripartite Treaty did not pledge the despatch of a single British soldier beyond the frontier. It was wholly an after-thought and was the deliberate choice of Auckland.

In the famous Simla Manifesto, the siege of Herat and the failure of Burnes' mission were inextricably mixed up, but with the best intention in the world one cannot understand the logic of the stand that since Muhammad Shah had made war upon Herat, Britain was justified in invading Afghanistan. Even if it were so—which is a fantastic assumption—we find that the siege of Herat was the main cause given out for the despatch of an expedition. But the seige was raised before the Manifesto was published. Where then was the justification for this expedition?

With the removal of the basic cause of the expedition, the project should have been abandoned. The main concern of the Government was the removal of the danger from the North West. With the Persian retreat, the Russian bogey automatically disappeared. In other words the North West menace completely died away and there

was no need of any policy of direct intervention in the affairs of Afghanistan. But the hitherto vacillating Auckland now became decisive and remained resolute—perhaps as a reaction to his life long vacillation—and declared his determination to carry through the projected invasion, despite the radical changes in the situation. Munshi Mohan Lal has tried to justify[34] this persistence of Lord Auckland in embroiling the country in an entirely unnecessary war. His argument is that though the Persians had raised the siege of Herat on 29th September 1838, the forts and districts of Ghuryun, Kurukh, Subzwar, and Foral were still maintained with hostile intentions and that it was with a view to thwarting these intentions that the expedition was sent. The argument is so thread-bare and naive. If as a result of some naval demonstration—a little threat—the Shah of Persia could be induced to withdraw from his most important objective—the strategic city of Herat—where is the room or reason to believe that the fate of the few remaining forts and districts could not be settled by peaceful negotiations? Even if it were not so, was the capture of a few districts an object worth the profuse blood that flowed, and the abundant money that was wasted?

Munshi Mohan Lal suggested that the Lahore court and the British Government were bound by the Tripartite Treaty to place Shah Shuja on the throne of Kabul. So far as the Treaty is concerned, there is not a single clause to support this contention. There might have been some secret understanding between the contracting parties, but that secret clause is not traceable in any document except Munshi Mohan Lal's account, though he is not the only champion of Lord Auckland's Afghan policy.

After the siege of Herat had been raised, it was the most opportune time to approach and befriend Dost Muhammad. Russia and Persia, his allies, had disappeared from the scene and Dost Muhammad was certainly in need of friends. He would have readily accepted Britain's hand of friendship, though hitherto this hand had been to him the hand of a ghost which appeared only to deceive and then vanished away in an impeneterable darkness. Lord Auckland instead of offering the olive branch, offered unprovoked aggression and

an unjust war. The most remarkable Afghan of his age was to be dethroned by the united forces of three sovereigns. Nothing more unscrupulous could have been designed or done.

There have been wars in history which were provoked and had to be fought, but the First Afghan War was a war which was neither provoked, nor just nor necessary. Why was it waged at all? What did it achieve? A ruthless massacre of men? The restoration of an exiled prince, who had proved his incapacity to rule, and who was soon to prove it again? Nothing was gained. No concessions—military, diplomatic or political ; no influence at the court of Kabul. A signal example of a war in history which was not at all necessary.

FOOT NOTES

1. Supreme Government to Burnes, September 11, 1937 ; 119/55, P.G.R.
2. Durand, First Afghan War, p. 34.
3. Durand, First Afghan War, pp. 36-43.
4. Kaye, War in Afghanistan, Vol. I, p. 307.
5. Please see Chapter II.
6. Burnes to Government, December 26, 1837; 108/67, P.G.R.
7. Correspondence, Persia and Afghanistan.
   Government to McNeill. November 21, 1836.
8. Indian Papers (1859). Burnes to Government, see letters dated March 5, 13, 24 and April 28, 1838.
9. (a) Dost Muhammad to Wade, 142/36 P.G.R.
   (b) Dost Muhammad to Auckland, 142/48, P.G.R.
10. Burnes to Government, 108/39, P.G.R.
11. Wade to Government, Nov. 7 1837 ; 119/72. P.G.R.
12. Ibid,,
13. Government to Wade, Nov. 25, 1837; 119/72 P.G.R.
14. Wade to Government, August 18, 1837; 144/18, P.G.R.

15. Burnes to Macnaughten; December 30, 1837, quoted by Kaye, p. 187.
16. Wade to Macnaughten, 142/48, P.G.R.
17. Ibid., P.G.R.
18. Colvin, Colvin, p. 95.
19. Macnaughten to Wade, 119/76, P.G.R.
20. Macnaughten to Wade, 119/72, P.G.R.
21. Macnaughten to Wade, 119/22, P.G.R.
22. Macnaughten to Wade, 121/3, 20 January 1838, P.G.R.
23. History of India, Roberts, p. 323.
24. Durand, First Afghan War, pp. 36-43.
25. Burnes to Government, 31st March 1838, Indian Papers (1859).
26. Ibid.,
27. Kaye: Op. Cit., p. 307.
28. Colvin, Colvin, pp. 129-30.
29. Kaye : Op. Cit., p. 308.
30. Colvin, Colvin : pp. 131-33.
31. Cambridge History of India, Vol. 5, p. 494.
32. A.C.F. Bell, Lord Palmerston, p. 352.
33. Quoted in John Russel Colvin (Rulers of India series).
34. Munshi Mohan Lal : Dost Muhammad Khan.

APPENDIX

The Tripartite Treaty 1838* (in full)

Treaty between British Government, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk.

Whereas a Treaty was formerly concluded between Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, consisting of fourteen articles, exclusive of the preamble and the conclusions, and whereas the execution of the provisions of the said treaty were suspended for certain reasons and whereas at this time Mr. W. H. Macnaughten having been deputed by the Right Honourable Lord Auckland G. C. B the Governor-General of India to the presence of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and vested with full powers to form a treaty in a manner consistent with the friendly engagements subsisting between the two states, the treaty aforesaid is reviewed and concluded with certain modifications and four new articles have been added thereto, with the approbation of and in concert with the British Government, the provisions therefore as contained in the following eighteen articles, will be duly and faithfully observed.

ARTICLE 1st

Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk disclaims all title on the part of himself, his heirs, his successors and all the Sadozais to all the territories, lying on either bank of the river Indus, that may be possessed by the Maharaja, *viz.* Cashmere, including its limits E. W, N. S., together with the Fort of Attock, Chuch Hezara, Khebel, Amb, with its dependencies on the left bank of the aforesaid river, and on the

* Treaties, Engagements and Saneds Vol. III. Compiled by C. W. Aitchison, B. C. S. Under Secretary to Government of India. Baroda and Punjab Section. Fourth Edition, page 151, No. LIX (P.G.R. Office).

right bank, Peshawar with the Eusufzai territory, Khatteks, Hisht Nagar, Meehnee, Kohat, Gungoo and all the places dependent in Peshawar, so far as the Khyber Pass, Bennu, the Viziri territory, Dowr, Tank, Gorand, Kalabagh and Kushalgher with their dependent districts, Dera Ismail Khan and its dependency together with Dera Ghazee Khan, Kot Mithan, Omarkote and their dependent territory, Singher, Heren, Dajel, Hajeepore and the Rajenpore and the three ketches as well as Mankera, with its district and the province of Multan situated on the left bank. These countries and places are considered to be the property and to form the estate of the Maharaja the Shah neither has nor will have any concern with them. They belong to the Maharaja and his posterity from generation to generation.

ARTICLE 2nd

The people of the country on the other side of Khyber will not be suffered to commit robberies or aggression or any disturbances on this side. If any defaulter of either state, who has embezzled the revenues takes refuge in the territory of the other, each party engages to surrender him and no person shall obstruct the passage of the stream which issues out of the Khyber defile and supplies the fort of Furrehgarh with water according to ancient usage.

ARTICLE 3rd

As agreeable to the treaty established between the British Government and the Maharaja, no one can cross from the left to the right bank of the Sutlej without a passport from the Maharaja. The same rule shall be observed regarding the passage of the Indus, whose waters join the Sutlej and no one shall be allowed to cross the Indus without the Maharaja's permission.

ARTICLE 4th

Regarding Shikarpore and the territory of Sind on the right bank of the Indus, the Shah will agree to abide by whatever may be settled as right and proper in conformity with the happy relations of friendship subsisting between the British Government and the Maharaja through Captain Wade.

ARTICLE 5th

When the Shah shall have established his authority in Kabul and Kandhar, he will annually send the Maharaja the following articles *viz.* 55 high-bred horses of approved colour and pleasant races, II Persian Scimitars, 7 Persian poignards, 25 good mules, fruits of various kinds, both dry and fresh, and cirdars or musk melons of a sweet and delicate flavour to be sent throughout the year, by the way of Kabul River to Peshawar, grapes, pomegranates, apples, quinces, almonds, *rasins*, pistahs or chest-nuts, an abundant supply of each, as well as pieces of satin of every colour, Chogas of fur, kimkhabs, wrought with gold and silver and Persian carpets, altogether to the number of 101 pieces. The Shah will continue to send all these articles every year to the Maharaja.

ARTICLE 6th

Each party will address the other on the terms of equality.

ARTICLE 7th

Merchants of Afghanistan, who will be desirous of trading to Lahore, Amritsar, or any other part of the Maharaja's possessions, shall not be stopped or molested on their way, on the contrary strict order shall be issued to facilitate their intercourse and the Maharaja engages to observe the same line of conduct on his part, in respect, to the traders who may wish to proceed to Afghanistan.

ARTICLE 8th

The Maharaja will yearly send to the Shah the following articles in the way of friendship : 55 pieces of Shawl, 25 pieces of muslin, II dopattahs, 5 pieces of kimkhab, 5 scarves, 5 turbans, 55 loads of Bareh rice (peculiar to Peshawar).

ARTICLE 9th

Any of the Maharaja's officers who may be deputed to Afghanistan to purchase horses or any other business as well as those who may be sent by the Shah into the Punjab for the purpose of purchasing piece goods or shawls etc., to the amount of Rs. 11,000/-

will be treated by both sides with due attention and every facility shall be afforded to them in the execution of these commissions.

ARTICLE 10th

Whereas the armies of the two states may happen to be assembled at the same place, on no account shall the slaughter of kine be permitted to take place.

ARTICLE 11th

In the event of the Shah taking any auxiliary force from the Maharaja, whatever booty may be required from the Barakzais, in jewels, horses, arms, great or small, shall be equally divided between the two contracting parties. If the Shah should succeed in obtaining possession of their property without the assistance of the Maharaja's troops, the Shah agrees to send a portion of it by his own agent to the Maharaja in the way of friendship.

ARTICLE 12th

An exchange of mission charged with letters and presents shall constantly take place between the three parties.

ARTICLE 13th

Should the Maharaja require the aid of any of the Shah's troops in furtherance of the objects contemplated by this treaty, the Shah engages to send a force commanded by one of its principal officers; in like manner the Maharaja will furnish the Shah, when required, with an auxiliary force composed of Mohammadans and commanded by one of his principal officers, so far as Kabul, in furtherance of the objects contemplated by this treaty. When the Maharaja may go to Peshawar, the Shah will depute a Shahzada to visit him on which occasion the Maharaja will receive and dismiss him with the honour and consideration due to his rank and dignity.

ARTICLE 14th

The friends and enemies of each of the three powers, that is to say, the British and the Sikh Governments and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk shall be the friends and enemies of all.

ARTICLE 15th

Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk engages for the attainment of his object, to pay without fail to the Maharaja, the sum of two lakhs of rupees of the Nanak-Shahie or Kuldar Currency; calculating from the date on which the Sikh troops may be despatched for the purpose of reinstating His Majesty in Kabul in consideration of the Maharaja's stationing a force of not less than 5,000 men, cavalry and infantry, of the Mohammadans persuasion, within the limits of Peshawar territory, for the support of the Shah and to be sent to the aid of His Majesty, whenever the British Government, in concert with the Maharaja, shall deem their aid necessary, and when any matter of great importance may arise to the westward, such measures will be adopted with regard to it as may seem expedient and proper at the time to the British and Sikh Governments. In the event of the Maharaja requiring the aid of any of the Shah's troops a deduction will be made to the period for which such aid may be afforded and the British Government holds itself responsible for the punctual payment of the above sum annually to the Maharaja so long as the provision of this treaty are duly observed.

ARTICLE 16th

Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk agrees to relinquish for himself, his heirs and his successors all claims of supremacy and arrears of tribute over the country now held by the Amirs of Sind and which will continue to belong to the Ameers of such a sum as may be determined under the mediation of the British Government, fifteen lakhs of such payment being made over by him to the Maharaja. On these payments being completed, Article 4 of the treaty of 12th March, 1833, will be considered cancelled and the customary interchange of letters and suitable presents between the Maharaja and the Ameers of Sind shall be maintained as heretofore.

ARTICLE 17th

When Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk shall have succeeded in establishing his authority in Afghanistan, he shall not attack or molest his nephew,

the ruler of Herat, in the possession of the territories now subject to his Government.

ARTICLE 18th

Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk binds himself, his heirs, his successors to refrain from entering into negotiations with any foreign state, without the knowledge and consent of the British and Sikh Governments, and to oppose any power having the design to invade the British or Sikh territories, by force of arms to the utmost of his ability.

The three powers to this Treaty, *viz.* the British Government, Maharaja Ranjit Singh and Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk, cordially agree to the foregoing articles. There shall be no deviation from them and in that case the present Treaty shall come into operation from and after the date on which the seals and signatures of the three contracting parties shall have been affixed thereto.

Done at Lahore, this 26th day of June in the year of our Lord 1838, corresponding with the 15th of the month of Asarh, 1895—Era of Bikramajit.

Signed and sealed this 25th day of July in the year 1838 A. D. at Simla.

Seal and signature of
Ranjit Singh.

Sd/- Auckland
Seal of the Governor-General

Seal and Signature of
Shah Shuja-ul-Mulk.

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